

INTO THE LIGHT

The Gray Pifer Story

by
Melton Wright



With A Foreword by
Dr. W. T. Sanger
President of
Virginia Medical College

An Introduction by
M. Robert Barnett
Executive Secretary
American Foundation for the Blind

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Boyce, Virginia

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED TO
BETTY,
MY WIFE

INTRODUCTION

The reader of this book will meet in its pages a courageous and vital personality who with serenity and perseverance followed her chosen path in life, that of service to others. We feel she never let her own handicap of blindness deter her from the pursuit of this goal.

Her most notable contribution is found in the record of her work with cerebral palsied children, and workers in this field will be interested in the six case studies included of students she helped in music and speech therapy at the Villa Rose Cerebral Palsy Center. Her success in human relations is recorded in the statements of her friends to whom she has been and continues to be an inspiration.

The book is the story of a successful life.

M. Robert Barnett, Executive Director
American Foundation for Overseas Blind, Inc.
American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.

FOREWORD

This record of the spirit, the deeply religious character, and the inspiring career of Nina Gray Pifer made during her lifetime will encourage others with physical handicaps to grow into ever-widening service and happiness. Not to have reached this little epic for all time, would have lost to enriching biography a rare chapter. Almost all of us have personal problems; not so many just like Miss Pifer's but problems nevertheless. How she developed her personal capacities, her faith, her trust, and her determination to live constructively within her physical limitations can show many others that the road is not easy, yet attainment is possible and joyful.

I dare say that if Miss Pifer were to seek a job now as a teacher of high school English, she doubtless would find one. Society generally has a different attitude toward the physically handicapped, because they have demonstrated numberless times how they can compensate for their limitations and work acceptably, often more so than those without handicaps.

It must not be overlooked that Miss Pifer is probably making an unusual contribution to music and speech therapy. It is to be hoped that some of her techniques will be further recorded for the contribution they may make to the treatment of cerebral palsy at the hands of others. It has been noted in the past that many of the outstanding contributions in most fields have been made by individuals more or less as the by-product of their service. Miss Pifer did not consciously begin her work with cerebral palsied children with the expectation of making a contribution to music and speech therapy. This came as a product of her personality and her zeal to use her resources to help others.

Our author is to be complimented on seeing an opportunity in the life story of Miss Pifer to strengthen the aspirations of others who may be physically handicapped. Almost all of us need more of the will, the courage, and the devotion of Miss Pifer.

Dr. William T. Sanger, President
Medical College of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia

Acknowledgments

To Miss Gray Pifer about whom this volume is written for her untiring efforts in recording seven hours of tapes and writing over seventy-five typed pages of information.

To Mr. and Mrs. Peter McQuade of Villa Rose, who worked diligently with Gray and the author to make this volume more effective. Especially for their excellent work in Chapter VII.

To the kind friends whose experiences and impressions constitute Chapter VI.

To Dr. W. J. Gifford, Dean of Madison State Teachers College, for information and recommendations concerning Miss Pifer's college work.

To Miss Katharine C. Sieg of the Harrisonburg High School English Department for reading the manuscript and offering helpful suggestions in the actual writing.

To Miss Bonnie Vance, the author's capable secretary, who was efficient and patient in transcribing seven hours of tape recordings and typing the manuscript several times.

To the Harrisonburg Business and Professional Women's Club for voting unanimously to be the exclusive distributors of this volume and whose support has been inestimable.

To Miss Ruby Ball, Supervisor of Art in the Harrisonburg Public Schools for her splendid silhouette on the cover.

Preface

This is a story of light—the fusion of divine light with human life. This is the story of light permeating personality; radiating from it; dispelling darkness; healing; guiding.

The story of Nina Gray Pifer belongs to everyone. It is a story of faith, courage, perseverance, heartaches, difficulties, success and happiness. It is a story told to challenge and inspire and give living evidence that with God and a yielded life all things are possible.

This story belongs to Gray Pifer, because she has lived it and for the most part written it. The author has served as little more than an amanuensis and has endeavored to maintain simplicity of style and language in order to preserve the original meaning and atmosphere of the subjects notes and recordings. Miss Pifer typed seventy-nine pages of data and experiences and recorded on tape over seven hours of similar material. In this undertaking, she has demonstrated the commendable characteristics which have marked her life from the beginning.

The most difficult task for the author in this enjoyable project, was the selection of facts and experiences, cases and creative work, from enough material for a volume twice the length. If important facts and notable achievements have been omitted, their absence must be blamed on the brevity of the volume, not on their intentional exclusion by the author.

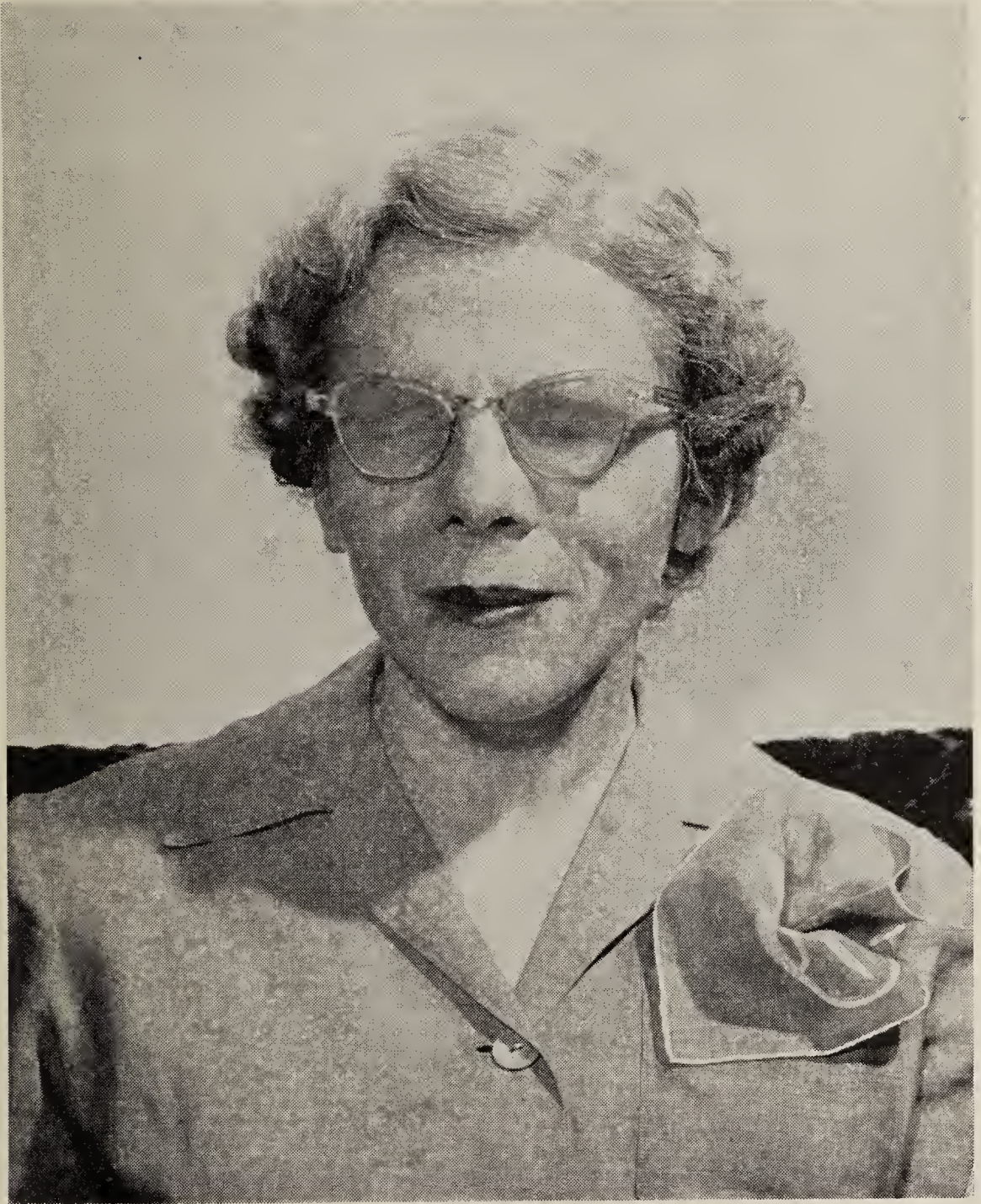
Seneca once wrote: "Let us bear with magnanimity whatever it is needful for us to bear." James Allen said: "For those who will fight bravely and not yield, there is triumphant victory over all the dark things of life." This is the story of a magnanimous soul, of triumphant victory over the dark things of life. It is the author's prayer as it goes forth, that many shall find strength from its pages and be guided INTO THE LIGHT.

MELTON WRIGHT

Harrisonburg, Virginia

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MISS NINA GRAY PIFER

On His Blindness

by
JOHN MILTON

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
“Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?”
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, “God doth not need
Either man’s work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o’er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

“I thank God for my handicaps, for, through them, I have found myself, my
work, and my God.”

—Helen Keller

CHAPTER I

A Spark of Light

“‘Let there be light!’ said God;
And forthwith light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence
Sprung from the deep.”

—Milton

A spark of light; then a tiny flame. The winds blow; the light flickers, fades; then bursts into glowing light that dispels the darkness and sheds abroad its radiance and warmth. A life begins; a soul is born. The shadow of death appears, threatens, vanishes; then a new personality emerges robed in faith and courage and molded into a vessel of service on the anvil of God.

Life began for Nina Gray Pifer in the quaint little Virginia town of Mt. Crawford. To most of the citizens, April 8, 1907, was a typical spring day. The sky was cloudless and blue; the sun was warm; the air crisp and replete with the fragrance of whirling apple blossoms that looked like snow in the springtime. But for Mr. and Mrs. L. J. Pifer, this was a day set apart—a day to remember.

When news was received that the new arrival was a girl, her parents rejoiced for now they had a son and a daughter. Everyone seemed to be happy for the young couple as the news spread on the party lines, at the community store, and over back-yard fences.

A year and a half later Mr. and Mrs. Pifer were stunned when the doctor solemnly confronted them with the startling truth—the operation on their little daughter’s eye was not successful; she was blind!

The same people who had rejoiced with them, now shared the shocking news and suffered with them. There wasn’t much said by the neighbors and friends at first. The emotions that welled within them were too deep for verbal expression. But neither the parents nor the sympathizing neighbors could know then that what, to them, seemed an insuperable obstacle would become the greatest blessing of her life, and that years later she would be able to say with sincerity:

“I WOULD NOT, EVEN IF I COULD, EXCHANGE
PLACES WITH THOSE WHO SEE.”

Nor could these kind neighbors and friends understand then the part that they, with her parents, would have in shaping her attitudes and making possible for her a full, rich, busy, and happy life.

The Pifers were disturbed and distressed. They didn’t say much, but in the lonely evenings as they sat in the twilight their

thoughts seemed to mingle in the silence and when they looked into each others eyes, words were not necessary. Mutual understanding and agreement were exchanged. Their child was blind. She would never see the light. She would never be able to fulfill the dreams they both shared for her before the truth was made known! Yet they knew, too, that they loved her just as much, perhaps even more. God had been good to them for he had given them a little girl to care for and love.

At first Gray alone was unperturbed. She was blissfully unaware that anything was amiss and continued to be during the first five or six formative years of her childhood. She knew, of course, that she was blind. And fortunately her parents never avoided the fact or the word. Whenever it was necessary, they stated simply that she was blind, as naturally as they said her eyes were blue or her hair was brown. But never did they intimate that blindness might be a limitation.

Naturally, there were things which Gray could not do. "You can't do that," her parents would say to her, and since they did not suggest it, it did not occur to her that blindness might be the reason. She had frequently heard them say the same thing to her brothers and reasoned that children weren't supposed to do certain things. She soon learned that there were certain things that children could and were expected to do. Here again, an important step in her inner healing process was taking place. Her parents never allowed blindness to be an excuse for her failing to do things which were attainable for her. They required her to pick up and put away her toys just as her brothers did. With the help of God, they were able to avoid isolating her or in any way giving her the feeling of being different. Without this understanding guidance, she could never have developed the philosophy of life which has been her beacon from the beginning.

Thus, during those early years, when she thought of blindness at all, which she says was seldom, she regarded it as something which made her different only because it enabled her to do what others could not do. She could distinguish money by touch, quickly and accurately separating the pennies, nickels, dimes and other monetary denominations. She did not need the lantern at night to run upstairs or out to the smoke house for her mother. In these things she felt different, but it was a good feeling, a feeling of an accomplished difference.

Gray's parents never did pity her, at least not verbally in her presence. Nor did they unduly praise her just because she was blind or through pity. But, of course, there were times when they could not protect her from hearing words of pity and praise from others. Often her neighbors stood aghast as they watched her perform a simple task which to them appeared incredible. Child-like and quite naturally, Gray enjoyed these experiences. However, she wasn't pert or show-offish; her parents wouldn't have tolerated such behavior. What she seemed to feel was a type of inner glow that was more strength than pleasure.

It is not surprising that the Pifers had no previous experience in special preparation for meeting and understanding the needs and the problems of a blind child. As a matter of fact in the early part of the twentieth century very little was known about it. There were state schools where a blind person could be taught to read by means of "raised letters." And many of the blind learned to play musical instruments with which they could entertain themselves and others. And, of course, the public was at least vaguely familiar with the Helen Keller story. Perhaps the general concept of blindness was directly related to the blind "cup-bearer" on the street corner with his penny pencils and walking cane. Gray's parents could hardly have anticipated that their daughter's achievements would even approximate those of Helen Keller and they would never have entertained once the thought of her becoming a "cup-bearer!" But, at best, the future must have looked dark and discouraging to them.

One day Mr. Pifer took Gray to the local doctor's office to have her right eye dressed. When he returned home with her, his heavy steps coupled with the pathetic droop of his shoulders, and the peculiar way in which he clasped her to himself, as if to protect her from something terrible, transmitted to his wife the foreboding news which he bore. The bulging cataract had been removed, but if her life was to be spared, the entire right eye would have to be sacrificed. The tiny spot covering the left eye might or might not continue to grow, but at best there would not be more than light perception in it. The weeks that followed were filled with sleepless nights, tear-stained pillows, and countless prayers—prayers for wisdom, strength and guidance.

Except for her eyes, Gray's physical growth and development was normal. At eighteen months she was beginning to walk independently, and she talked with a larger vocabulary and more clarity than most children at that age. Her father could see an unusual amount of curiosity and interest developing, and he recognized this as a wholesome sign. There was the day he saw her go to the rack on which the children's coats and hats were hung, and examine all of them until she found her own. From this moment, he was heartened by the vision of her great possibilities, and he determined to help her develop them into realities. He foresaw clearly the difficulties before her. The problems, and the obstacles that would loom high. But he knew, too, that a physical disability becomes a handicap only to the extent that it is allowed to be a limitation. With the help of God and her mother, he would do his best to arm her with an unshakable faith, a rugged determination, a willingness to endeavor to do more than her part and always to give her best. With these she would undoubtedly succeed and find paths of enjoyable and happy service.

It was fortunate for Gray that her parents did not allow everything to be subservient to her, to her whims or needs. Mr. Pifer had the responsibility of supporting his family and Mrs. Pifer the usual duties of a housekeeper and a mother of three sons and a

daughter. The fact that early she learned to rely on her own resources aided in the development of initiative and originality.

Physically, she continued to grow and develop normally. Her steps became sure and confident until, one day she was able to go unassisted anywhere in her home or the big yard in which she delighted to play. Daily she was confronted by some new obstacle which she surmounted, and converted into a stepping stone to fuller living.

Throughout her useful and colorful life, the one greatest asset which Gray has always possessed, is her spiritual insight and power. It has been the underlying force which has enabled her to surmount obstacles, open closed doors, and accomplish the seemingly impossible. Spiritual growth and development are vital for everyone, but for the physically handicapped person it has special significance. However, there are many people who apparently believe that the blind, as partial compensation for their physical lack, possess deep spiritual insight and vision. This is an erroneous idea as many of the physically handicapped will declare. It is true, however, that the blind, the deaf, the cerebral palsied and people with other physical problems cannot do for themselves many of the things that the average person can do; hence, they are compelled to draw upon the great inexhaustible source of strength and wisdom which they find in religious faith.

Parents can talk to their children about what is right and wrong; the type of behavior patterns they should endeavor to develop and follow; faith in God and their fellowman. But the method for getting these truths and concepts into the fabric of young life is through the medium of personal exampleship. Since the Pifers were keenly aware of this, they endeavored to live before their children a life and faith that would challenge and inspire them. At an early age Gray was kneeling each night at her mother's knee in prayer. And on the week-ends when her father returned from his work which frequently took him away from his home, she knelt at his knees for her "Now I lay me." The attitudes and practices of her parents and also her grandparents contributed inestimably to her spiritual development.

Gray learned early to pray under all conditions. To give thanks and to beseech the help of God in times of stress and trial became a cherished practice. One day the news spread through the little town that one of the neighborhood children had been stricken with infantile paralysis. As soon as the news arrived at the Pifer home, the children suddenly missed their mother from her activities in the kitchen. But they had learned not to look for her. They knew she was in her bedroom praying for God's will to be done in the physical healing of this child. As Gray says: "We knew that if mother were in the bedroom praying, everything was going to be all right."

Often when waking from a nap or going about her play, she would hear her Grandmother talking to "The Father" in a whisper with deep reverence, but as naturally as if she were speaking to one

of the children. This relationship with God became more and more a part of Gray's life and as the years went by she depended on this realistic relationship for so many things—things that to one with less faith would seem too trivial "to bother" God with. A brief experience from Gray will illustrate this close relationship:

"There are times when I am alone in a room, or even alone in the house. I need something—a pin perhaps—but I cannot find it. Although I know it is right there, I just can't seem to put my hand on it. At times like this, I relax and say: 'Father, will you help me?' Or, 'Where is it please?' You see, I am never really alone. HE is always beside me, and just as sincerely as I believe in kneeling before Him in prayer, I also believe that I can speak to Him, carry on a conversation with Him, as I go about my daily activities. And He grants my requests for assistance. Almost invariable, my hand goes right to the needed article or object."

David Garrick, an outstanding and greatly admired actor of George Whitefield's time, is supposed to have remarked frequently that he would give anything he possessed if he could pronounce the O as Whitfield did. If one could hear Gray, as she talks to God, say "Father," with the truest humility in that vibrant, modulated, and utterly sincere tone, he would doubtlessly offer anything, to be able to say it and feel it as she does. When one hears her say simply and quietly, "Father", the presence of God seems to flood one's spirit with the power and warmth of healing. This relationship beginning in early childhood and maturing with the years, has been the salient secret of Gray Pifer's phenomenal inner healing, and she is always the first one to acknowledge it.

Sunday School in the Mt. Crawford Methodist Church, during those years when the roots of character were growing deeper in the rich soil of faith, was profoundly significant. It was there, more than anywhere else at first, that the townspeople made their greatest contributions to her normal outlook on life. Her father always saw that she knew her "Golden Text" and the main facts of the lesson. She was invariably prepared and eager to make contributions to the class as the lesson-story was re-told and discussed. The teachers and others frequently commended her for being so "smart" and her ability was becoming the topic of conversation in the sewing circles and ladies auxiliaries of her community. This gave her a sense of achievement, which everyone needs, and the handicapped particularly.

It was in the Sunday School that Gray made her first public recitations. At special Christmas programs or on Children's Day, she had her part along with the other children. "For these occasions", she fondly recalls, "my parents gave me very special training. Not only did they see to it that I knew the lines accurately, but also that I spoke them clearly and distinctly. And during those first years I knew nothing of stage fright. On these special occasions when the Superintendent would announce my number, Dad would go forward with me, lift me onto the platform, and hold my hand while I spoke. If a word eluded me, he whispered it soft-

ly, and I would continue. Friends were loud in their praise of what I did, but it was really my parents who merited the credit. However, these experiences in success and recognition from others helped me to realize that I could do what others did."

Life consists not alone in knowing, but what is equally important, in doing practical everyday chores. Her parents saw to it that normal development continued and she learned to perform certain tasks. Standing on a chair by the kitchen table, she could wash the dishes, then carefully dry them and put everything away in its proper place. If she failed to do the job right, Mrs. Pifer would call her back, point out her mistakes or the over-looked task, and supervise the correction. Happily, this was an infrequent occurrence.

Gray enjoyed the opportunity to learn and serve in her home. It thrilled her to be asked to set the table and heightened her sense of usefulness to have her Mother call out, "Gray, look in the little table drawer and get the napkins, please." If something her mother needed was upstairs and she was the nearest child available, she was requested to go up and get it. The neighbors would gasp in mingled amazement and fear when they saw her coming down the stairs with a big lamp chimney or some other article.

She pleasantly reminisces about the fun she had with her mother and brothers in doing the various duties in the home. "It was such fun to grind coffee on the old-fashioned coffee mill. No coffee has ever smelled so good. In summer there were the roasting ears to be shucked, peas and beans to be shelled; and in the winter, corn to shell for the chickens. What enjoyment we received from making games out of these seemingly menial tasks!" At the suggestion from a friend that shelling corn, peas, beans and such things might make her fingertips less sensitive and therefore, her reading more difficult, Mrs. Pifer found other jobs which would not endanger the sensitivity of her fingertips.

Mr. Pifer loved the out-of-doors. "Babe," he would call to her, using the nickname he had given her, "Come out here and LOOK at the tiny bunches of grapes!" Or he would say, "There's something down here you'll want to SEE!" And when she came running to SEE there would be some downy baby chicks. These experiences were not only pleasant and an important part of her inner healing, but the normal language that her parents used was just the right thing to direct her thinking and that of others away from her lack of physical vision. To say to a blind person, "FEEL THIS OR THAT!" immediately focuses attention on the problem. Although she does not know when, early in life she became cognizant of the truth that being blind means simply that one SEES by means other than the eyes—by touch or with the ears and mind. Fortunate for Gray that her parents had determined to ignore, insofar as possible, the existence of a physical difficulty, and in order to do this, normal language was essential.

It is difficult for anyone to recall the exact time he became conscious of colors. One just seems always to have known that

colors existed and that red was red and black was black, and the attitudes and representations that each one conveyed. But for a person who does not have physical sight, one might think that he is not color conscious at all or that everything is simply shrouded in darkness. This is far from an accurate assumption, and Gray dispells such erroneous ideas in a most revealing and convincing manner.

"As a very young child I could 'see' colors— picture, envision, imagine them—whatever it was. At any rate, green was not the same as purple; red was not the same as pink, nor were brown or tan the same. Also, I early became aware of the difference in shades. For example, between shell pink and rose pink; light blue, dark and navy blue, and the various and varying in-between shades.

"I'll never forget the day I learned that certain colors do not match, and should not be used together. At the time of this new realization, one of my treasured possessions was a pair of black shoes with red tops. Mother wouldn't permit me to wear my pink dress with them. My heart was broken, but the lesson I learned has stood me in good stead, for it did not take me long to understand that if red and pink did not look well together, the same would be true of certain other colors. Now I am like any individual. There are colors that I like; others that I do not. Certain shades of a color I like very much better than others.

"It is difficult for me to describe or explain colors as I see them. It is associated with varying degrees of light and warmth or heat. For instance, in red, there is more light than in pink, in pale pink, the degree of light is still smaller, or perhaps it is that pale pink is cooler, more delicate. When a color is mentioned, or when I think of it, I picture that which is always blue, the degrees of light, the patterns of the rays, with the shading of warmth or coolness, that is always blue. Then the shades of blue are softer, brighter, darker, warmer or cooler. And it is the same with all the other colors. There is a general pattern or foundation for each. How do I know that my idea of colors is correct? I don't, but it meets my needs and that is the important thing."

Contrary to what many seem to think, physically-handicapped children are not preternaturally good, and Gray, was "proof positive of this fact." Many of her neighbors knew from on-the-scene-observation that she could put up as good a fight as her brothers and often demonstrated her pugilistic abilities when they encroached upon her rights. And there were times when she didn't wait for encroachment and became the diminutive little aggressor. She received her share of the black eyes, bloody noses and skinned shins, and matched "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" with the best of them. Her brothers and the neighborhood gang respected and accepted her as one of them.

One of Mrs. Pifer's firm rules for her children was that they could play with their toys as often as they desired, but they were always required to put them away when through with them. Gray would crawl over the floor, her hands, reaching out, covering in front of her, then to the left and right, until she found whatever toy or object she had handled at play. The neighbors thought the

Pifers hard and unfeeling, but they didn't know what was in the hearts of those loving parents. Many times as they watched her groping and searching for her toys, they wanted to run over and gather she and the toys and hold her close. But wisely realizing how detrimental this would ultimately be to her security and independence, they usually busied themselves with something else so that they wouldn't have to watch her. They knew that someday they wouldn't be around to do the difficult things for her.

Gray usually got along splendidly with her peers and was more natural with them than with adults. Perhaps it was because she was not too much affected by their attitude toward her. They expected neither little nor much of her, and, consequently, when she was with them she could be her true self. But there were times when the acrid words of a playmate would cut deep into her heart and almost overwhelm her with a feeling of loneliness or of being unwanted.

One day a group of the children had gathered at the home of Gray's uncle. His wife's little niece from a near-by town was visiting them, and all of the children wanted to play with the visitor. They sought, each in his own way, to make a good impression on her. One of the favorite games which they frequently played was, "Among the Little White Daisies." As the game began Gray took her place in the circle. At that moment, her cousin, Catherine, turned to her and said haughtily, "We don't want you to play. YOU'RE BLIND!" It wouldn't have been so bad if Catherine had been the only one to say it. But when she said it, Nola, the visitor, repeated it parrot-fashion with the same spirit of haughtiness. Gray was stunned. If they had slapped her she would have defended herself by retaliating. But this—this was different from anything she had experienced before. She asked herself over and over what there was about being blind that would keep the children from wanting to play with her. Then, without a word, she dropped the hands of the children who were standing beside her in the circle, and left the group.

Fortunately, her Grandmother Pifer had been observing the group at play. Immediately she came over to Gray and asked what Catherine had said to her. Gray told her.

"Oh, don't pay any attention to her. Sometimes she forgets how to be nice. Why just the other day she pushed me right out of my chair," replied Grandmother Pifer. At this statement, Gray raised her head, and her own injury passed as she became indignant about Catherine's having been so rude to her grandmother. Presently, through the understanding and gentle guidance of her grandmother, Gray was back with the group, and Catherine was choosing her as the wife in "The Farmer in the Dell."

One day, a neighbor over-heard some of Gray's childish chatter concerning her big plans for the future. She remarked to Mrs. Pifer, "My, wouldn't it be wonderful if someday Gray would be self-supporting." Gray was shocked that there would be any ques-

tion about such a thing, and with firm resolution said, "Why, I'm going to be self-supporting!" She has held fast to this ever since.

Soon she would enter school and take the initial step of the long trek down the road that would make her goal a reality.

CHAPTER II

Halls of Light

"Light is the symbol of truth."

—Lowell

Gray's education began in the home. Her parents were conscious from the beginning that she would require a larger background of experiences and preparation before she could enter a formal school program. It seemed that everything that had happened previously was to pave the way for the day when she would begin her academic training at the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind. And now, finally, the time had arrived.

A few days before she left for school, her Mother, once again, gave direction to her thinking that contributed to the healing process and gave courage and confidence to a child on the verge of leaving home to enter the first grade.

Otis, her oldest brother, had been attending the public school in Mt. Crawford for several years. He talked about his work, the three R's, his books and pencils and tablets. These things had become familiar to Gray, and now, as she prepared to go to school, some questions arose in her mind. As Mrs. Pifer moved about collecting the things which Gray would need at V.S.D.B., she talked to her about the school. She made it sound like a beautiful and interesting story in which Gray would soon become the leading character. The fact that being blind didn't make any difference in Gray's mind was obvious as she queried: "Mama, when I get to school they will give me a pencil and tell me to write, and I don't know how. So what will I do?"

Here again the healing hand of God reached forth gently and touched her through the wisdom and understanding of her Mother. Perhaps the most natural answer which she could have given would have been: "You won't use a pencil; blind people have a different way of writing." If this had been the answer, Gray probably would have begun to think of herself as different from most people. The term, "blind", again would have threatened to occupy too large a place in her thinking, and the effect would have been detrimental to her positive outlook on life. But Mrs. Pifer wisely replied: "Don't you worry about that. Your teachers will show you exactly what to do." Therefore, a few days later when Gray was given a slate and stylus and instructed in writing by punching dots, it did not occur to her to question the procedure, since her mother had said the teachers would show her what to do.

At last, in the fall of 1914, the long-anticipated first day of school arrived. It was a cool, clear morning, and Gray was an excited, happy little girl as she kissed her brother a hasty good-bye, and with both her parents, started down to the postoffice to await the mail carrier, who had offered to give them a ride to the B. and O. railroad station.

After an interesting train trip, they arrived at the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind in Staunton. Mr. Bowles, the Superintendent, had a strange, strained voice, and it seemed to Gray that he was stiff and formal. He frightened her at first, but later she learned to honor and respect him. Miss Everette, who was introduced as her teacher, caused her to have some doubts and fears at the outset; however, as time went by she became a devoted friend and Gray fondly remembers her now as one of the best teachers.

Miss Catlett, the house-mother, seemed to be the right person at the right time, for when she was introduced to Gray, she immediately felt secure and warm inside. She spoke with great cordiality to the Pifers. Then taking Gray on her lap, she calmed her fears with a gifted, magical touch, and gave assurance that everything was going to be "just fine."

The first few hours at school were exciting. Everything seemed so vast, so new, so exciting! The rooms, the voices; even the odor of a floor cleaner or disinfectant impressed her as being "wonderful"! With childish braggadocio, she exclaimed to her parents: "Maybe I won't even come back to old Mt. Crawford for Christmas." Their past experience had taught them to be adept in over-looking statements and giving the right answers. This one they definitely ignored.

A few hours later, just before they departed for the homeward journey, Gray became exceedingly moody. Little things seemed to annoy her. When her Mother attempted to straighten the black tie before her first-day-at-school picture was taken, she was very pert and cross. Of course, her every action and attitude was a cover-up for the turmoil and confusion within. She later recalled: "It was my defense, my way of being a 'big girl' when it would have been much easier to be a 'baby'." When her Dad gave her a hurried kiss and a terse, snappy farewell, and her Mother began to cry as she said good-bye, the "big front" and the strong defensive began to topple. She pushed at her Mother and defensively protested, "Don't Mother! You'll make me cry." By late afternoon, Gray wanted to go home more than anything, but her desires were drowned in her tears.

The following day, she was more emotionally disturbed than her first day, and the tears flooded her cheeks. Here again, in a moment of great need, the healing touch was supplied. Several of the older girls saw her crying and came over to comfort her. "Don't you want to be a big girl and graduate?" one of them asked. Of course, it would be a long time before she would graduate, but at that very moment, the word took on a signifi-

cance for her that it never lost. It became a beacon in the lighthouse of achievement, shining dimly at first, but always shining and challenging her as it grew brighter, and she nearer to the port of success. She wanted so much to be a "big girl and graduate some day"!

At first, learning to read Braille was difficult and progress was slow. However, as time passed, she became highly proficient in her reading. She tells of an important and interesting experience with her Mother, at this early stage of her education.

"On Mama's first or second visit to me at school, she was allowed to observe me in class. I had a very bad time with my reading that day, partly because I was annoyed when the teacher decided that one book in which she had tried me was too far advanced, and she had to give me the primer sheets, which made me very unhappy. Mama, I learned later, had been quite discouraged. 'I don't think Gray will ever learn touch-heading,' she told Dad when she returned home. To me she gave no hint of her fear. 'Just keep trying,' she encouraged. 'You'll get it.' And I did. When I went home for Thanksgiving, I could read every one of those primer sheets. My teacher fastened them all together so that I could take them home and read them to my family and friends. That primer! I shall never forget it, the one with 'I SEE you' as the first sentence. And when Miss Everette put the pages together for me to take home, there was a cover on which was a large apple that I could trace with my finger. How many times, during that short vacation, I read my primer for wondering, marveling, astounded relatives and friends, I do not know. And how I loved doing it! From that time until now, reading has been a pleasure."

At the closing program of her initial school year, Gray was chosen to demonstrate touch-reading for a large group of visitors, who had assembled for the Commencement exercises. Since that time she has found a peculiar pleasure in giving Braille Demonstrations, which she feels is one excellent way of helping the general public understand the blind, and of bringing about a better understanding between the blind and those who see.

Gray did not like school as much the first few years as she did in upper elementary and high school. Although she didn't enjoy it as much, she received excellent training in the basic skills. They did a great deal of oral reading, with emphasis on expression, enunciation, pronunciation, and regard for punctuation. The spelling was usually oral, and it meant more than just spelling a word. It involved correct enunciation and pronunciation and an awareness of syllables. Years later, a thorough knowledge in this skill would aid her in cerebral palsy work as she stimulated and motivated speech by means of speech and music therapy.

Of great importance to Gray was the training which she received in Scripture memorization. During her first two years, she learned four new verses each week from the Bible. One each day, Monday through Thursday, with a review on Friday. Her teacher, Miss Everette, always had the most delicious small hard

candies which she used for a reward and incentive for learning new verses. By the end of the first school year, Gray had learned two hundred and six verses and devoured two hundred and six pieces of hard candy.

Later she took an examination on this memory work and wrote a perfect paper. For this she was allowed to choose any book of the Bible, a copy of which was printed in New York Point Type—the dot system then in use. She selected the book of THE PSALMS. This knowledge of Scripture has been one of the notable factors in the endless healing process which exists in her life, and she has drawn upon these verses in times of praise, sorrow and difficulties.

The writer recalls the first time he visited Miss Pifer at the Cerebral Palsy Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia. There were two young men patients in the room with her. When the writer walked in and was introduced to them, they became disturbed with smiling, looking at each other, perhaps, too excited. It was doubtful as to how long it would take to return them to their proper posture and composure necessary for the continuation of the lesson. The writer wondered how Miss Pifer would handle this situation? What method would she use to bring order to the students? To his surprise, but delight, she said quietly, "Now let's quote our favorite verse for Mr. Wright." Then she spoke slowly and distinctly, "BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD." In her soft, calm voice the words seemed to reach out and sooth the excited pair, and the room suddenly was filled with peace and silence. And, the Presence of God.

Gray was overcome by illness several times during her school career. Once measles kept her out of school and left her with a severe ear involvement. Then one time she narrowly escaped pneumonia and was slow regaining her strength. Despite her many illnesses, she managed to keep abreast of her work and pass from year to year.

It seems that in the fifth grade, Gray really began to take a purposeful attitude toward school. Perhaps it was her teacher in addition to the new course that was added, namely, typing. Learning to type was not only interesting and enjoyable, but most of all it added to her independence. Now she would be able to write her own letters to her family and friends. It was diverting and exciting!

In the seventh grade, Gray became interested in debating. With the help of her teacher, she became a forceful and convincing debater and was on the winning team her first year. For several years she was outstanding in this activity and developed confidence in thinking independently and in self-expression. Once again the healing hand of God was at work.

Gray had always demonstrated a great interest in babies and younger children. As the years unfolded, this interest grew. After she became acclimated and adjusted to the school life, she remembered how she had been miserable and discontented and

the older girls had comforted and encouraged her; how much it had meant to her when one of them had asked, "Don't you want to be a big girl and graduate some day?" Because of their kindness, she reached out for the younger students and was never too busy to try and comfort them, to hold them, tell them stories, help them with their lessons and dream with them. Little did she suspect how helpful this voluntary love-work would be in the years ahead.

At the beginning of her junior year, her health failed again and she was compelled to go home and rest for over three months. When she returned, she was given her mid-term examinations and despite her lengthy absence, she passed them.

The faintly seen beacon that first had appeared back in 1914, was much brighter now, as graduation day drew near. Gray's Mother and Dad had been with her that first day when she had entered the first grade with trepidation and perturbation. Now they were both present as she received her high school diploma. How thrilled and grateful she was that they could share this memorable day with her. The day would have been incomplete without them, for they had contributed inestimably to making this a reality.

After the graduation dinner, Gray said a sorrowful and tearful farewell to schoolmates and friends and to her teachers. Paradoxically, she was overwhelmed with joy, yet visibly miserable. As she went to the bus terminal with her parents, she was still crying and sobbing. A stranger standing nearby said to Mr. Pifer, "Has the young lady lost a friend?" To which he replied, "She's lost many friends." Many friends had been left behind, and with them memories that would live within her heart forever. Another chapter in her life had been written and a new one was soon to begin.

A strange summer followed her graduation. She couldn't seem to think straight. Her world appeared to be crumbling all around her. The foundation had been removed. She was not going back to V.S.D.B. To her it was almost like saying life was over; there was no future. Partly because she wanted to be so busy that she couldn't think about herself, and partly because she needed to earn some money for college, she worked the entire summer in Daily Vacation Bible Schools and in special programs.

Gray and her Mother had talked to Dr. Duke, the president of Madison College, concerning her entrance in the fall, and he had reluctantly agreed to "give her a chance." At that time, no blind person had ever attended Madison; mainly, perhaps, because handicapped persons were not generally accepted. In a sense, this was a pioneering step for the college, Dr. Duke and Gray.

The desire to attend college had first taken root when she was in the seventh grade. Later she told her good friend, Mrs. Virginia "Lindy" Lindamood, now a staff member of radio station

W.S.V.A. in Harrisonburg, that she wanted to get a higher education. To her surprise, Lindy told her that she didn't see why she couldn't go to college. She then informed Gray that a steadily-increasing number of colleges and universities were opening their doors to the blind; moreover, Lindy added that in her class there was a young blind man who was making a good record. That was the turning-point, the moment of decision. If others could do it, so could she. The twig was bent.

When the news was circulated that Gray Pifer was going to attend Madison College, there was much talk and speculation. Devoted friends later admitted that they were skeptical. They wanted her to go. They would do all they could to help, but they had their doubts. It just seemed impossible. Dr. Duke, although willing to give her a chance to make her feel good, admitted two years later that he had not thought she would make the grade. But Gray knew that she had to succeed. Not just for herself, but for all of those who had confidence in her, and for the doubters who thought her foolish even to attempt such an undertaking. Repeatedly, she told herself that she had to succeed, especially for those other blind students who would follow her if she were successful.

The Pifers were not people of means, and it was difficult to supply the needs of the family. Money was scarce, but Gray's faith was abundant, and a few days before school began she scraped together enough to pay her expenses for the first quarter. Fortunately, she lived only eight miles from the college and could live at home.

The first week was trying. She was weary from the strain and excitement. Her mother had accompanied her that week, aiding in locating the right buildings and classrooms and taking care of other details as they confronted them. She shared the exhaustion and strain.

After supper, that first Friday night, she spoke out with a note of discouragement in her voice, a note infrequently heard in her scale of life. "I'm afraid, Gray," she bluntly said, "that you have bitten off more than you can chew." Gray didn't answer. She knew with her heart and mind that her Mother had voiced the same thing she had been thinking. They finished the dishes, and swallowing hard, Gray ran upstairs and flung herself across the bed, exhausted and disappointed beyond thought. Sleep came immediately.

When she awoke, several hours later, she felt completely refreshed, and her whole life and problem appeared to have been altered. God had reached down and touched her with His restorative power and applied the healing touch. Now the problems that previously had loomed large were dwarfed by determination and courage to accept them and meet them as they arose. She would not have any Braille textbooks, neither would she be working with teachers and fellow students who had experience with the blind, but these would create a greater chal-

lenge, rather than deterrents.

Mrs. Pifer read her lessons to her each night. Occasionally her father or youngest brother, Harris, helped, but her mother did the major part of it. In class, she took Braille notes and used a typewriter for tests. If tests were given which involved completion answers, the professors were considerate of her, permitting her to make special arrangements by dictating the answers to someone else who could write them in for her.

Gray majored in English and history, because she was interested in them and wanted to teach them in high school. She also took psychology, hygiene, public speaking, public school music, the history of music, music appreciation and private lessons in voice. At V.S.D.B. she had acquired a good background in music, having taken introductory courses in history of music, music theory, harmony and private lessons in voice, piano, mandolin and the violin. This musical training was to be one of her most useful gifts in working with cerebral palsied children and the youngsters at the Hines Memorial Pythian Home at New Market, Virginia.

The years at Madison were busy, happy ones. There she made many devoted friends. The girls were always thoughtful and considerate of her and in two years, she never did walk across the campus alone. She started out alone, at times, but invariably one of the girls would look out of the window and see her. A moment more and someone would be at her side to walk with her to her destination. These experiences were deep and abiding, and Gray has never ceased to thank God for these kind, understanding friends, who unselfishly aided her.

Gray spent only two years at Madison. She intended to return later to continue working toward her degree. Dr. Duke invited her to come back and complete her work whenever she felt the circumstances would permit. She felt the urge to stop when she did and earn enough money to return without straining to amass sufficient sums from quarter to quarter and simultaneously keep up with her academic work. Mrs. Pifer also had felt the strain of the strenuous grind, and her eyes were becoming weak. Many times she was unable to read assignments. And so, because of these two important reasons and other minor ones, Gray decided to discontinue her college work and seek employment.

Gray had been a student at Madison College from September, 1926 until June, 1928. Throughout the entire period she did work of honor roll level, while earning fifty-six hours credit. College officials and teachers gave her the highest recommendations as a person and a student.

Dean W. J. Gifford wrote:

"Miss Pifer is a very remarkable girl. In spite of her blindness, she is quite the equal of most members of her classes, except where actual sight is fundamental. She has patience, courage, determination, and an omnivorous appetite for knowledge. She is especially talented in music

and her teachers recommend her for this work."

Miss Louise Boje, her beloved English teacher, wrote:
"I have nothing but praise for Miss Pifer. She has been by far the best student I have had in Harrisonburg."

Miss Edna Shaeffer, Director of Music, stated:
"In spite of a handicap, Miss Pifer is able to teach music. She has done excellent work in all music classes, and has done every kind of work that has been required of other students. She has conducted the sight singing with good results. Her true ear, interest in music and good singing voice will make her a good teacher."

The light was brighter. She was walking in its beam. It was her symbol of truth.

CHAPTER III

The Light of Service

"They serve God well, who serve His creatures."

—Mrs. Norton

Gray was anxious to secure a teaching position, and began to send out applications to public school superintendents. That very school year, 1928-1929, a law had been passed requiring high school teachers, beginning the following session, to have a four year degree. Her dream had been to teach English and history in a public high school. She had majored in these subjects, had a strong background of information in both, and was certified to teach them. If she was to gain employment before the new law barracaded her from entering into high school work, it would have to be that year. Recalling that experience and the strong desire to secure a position she writes: "Oh, how I wanted that job! With it I would have done something far more important than teaching; more vital than earning a living. It would have been my chance to prove, not only to myself, but to educators, to the general public, that a blind person could teach in a public high school working with those who see."

But from the outset the odds were heavily against her. Somehow she knew she was attempting the impossible, but she wrote countless letters of application, with a prayer and a hope that one superintendent would understand. Except for one brief sentence, her letters of application were similar to those of many other young people entering the teaching profession that year. It would have been pointless to send out letters minus that one sentence, and her conscience would not permit her to do otherwise. Realizing the uselessness of even sending letters with that sentence, she, nevertheless, sent them and in the final paragraph stated: "I AM WITHOUT SIGHT." The return on her investment was small. She received several courteous regrets and one application blank. But even as she filled it out, she realized favorable results were hardly within the realm of possibility.

Gray had a personal interview with only one superintendent. Some of her friends attempted to prepare her for it. They warned that he was frank, blunt and tactless. When the interview was held, he proved to possess all of these characteristics, plus a commendable one they had not mentioned. sincerity. When she revealed to him her desire, he looked

wide-eyed and gasped. He could not conceive how anyone who had been responsible for her education would suggest that she even attempt to teach people with sight.

"I am certified to teach in the public schools," she emphatically told him. He just couldn't see it, regardless of the certificate.

"Now how in the world would you handle your discipline problems?" he questioned.

Gray replied that she didn't think anyone could give a specific answer until a definite problem had arisen. Then she added, "If I were not teacher enough to handle my problems of discipline, I would be no teacher at all." He remained adamant and unconvinced.

Approaching from another angle, he asked, "And how would you grade your papers?" His voice suggested to her that he felt he had trapped her.

"I'd have someone read the papers to me, and having taught the subject, I would surely know whether or not the answers to the questions were correct."

"Well---," he muttered. Still unconvinced, he added, "If someone could read your papers to you, why couldn't they teach and let you stay at home!"

These words temporarily stunned her mental processes. They were acrid. They were trenchant and penetrating. She couldn't believe her ears. He must be joking. No, he wasn't joking; he meant it! "You stay at home." She prayed for patience, composure, the right words to utter.

"After next year," she said, "Virginia's high school teachers will be required to hold at least one degree." He nodded approval. "Well, do you honestly think," she emphatically queried, "that it would require that much education just to read papers?" He did not answer her question, but hurriedly changed the subject.

"Isn't there something else you can do?"

"I suppose I could teach music, but I don't want to. I want to teach English and history."

He didn't appear to hear the last statement, for he was grasping at the former one. Sitting forward in his chair and demonstrating interest, he ejaculated, "Now there, that's more like it. You ought to do quite well with music. As a matter of fact, I'd be very glad to have you teach my child music."

There it was again. Jumping to the conclusion that blindness pre-supposes special ability in music! Calmly, and almost laughingly she said to him, "Now, isn't it strange? You'd be willing to entrust your child's musical training to me, yet you don't give me credit for having the ability to teach him English or history."

Gray didn't get the job, but she came away from that interview with something even more valuable—the biggest challenge of her life! If she had been easily discouraged, she

would have bowed her head and perhaps never raised it again. But the power of Christ surged through her mind and heart, and she left the superintendent's office with her head held higher than when she entered. She would succeed! Someday she would show this man that she could do it!

The school session began, but Gray was jobless. Discouragement did not overcome her, for she knew that her prayers would be answered and that God would lead her to His place for her. A few offers trickled in, but none offered employment in a public school. Later that year, Gray taught at Centerville, Pleasant Valley and her own home town, Mt. Crawford. This work was sponsored by parent-teacher groups who desired music lessons and instruction for their children. She taught music in the classrooms, worked with special groups for public performances and gave private instruction in piano. The friendships and experience which she received in these three schools were lasting and invaluable.

After the second winter in this work, she knew she must find employment elsewhere. Going from school to school in all kinds of weather, frequently leaving home very early and often teaching straight through the day was extremely fatiguing. Many times she did not return home until nine o'clock at night. After this she would spend two or three hours in preparation for the next day. This strenuous routine strained at every nerve and sinew, and she felt completely inadequate to go ahead.

It was during the second year in this job that she had her left eye removed. The trouble began when she was at Madison. She had light perception in this eye, the sight of which had been covered by a tiny white spot. The doctors had thought the spot would continue to grow, but they were wrong. It remained small and troublesome. And when a simple accident occurred, it flared up.

One night Mrs. Pifer was reading an assignment to Gray. She was sitting opposite her and for some unknown reason both of them moved forward simultaneously. Mrs. Pifer was trying to procure better lighting for her reading, and Gray was endeavoring to change her position and rest. As this position change was in progress, the corner of the book struck her in the eye. Mrs. Pifer was horrified at the thought of this careless mishap, although at the time it didn't seem very bad. **The only** visible indication was a redness. However, the next night Gray began to experience much discomfort. She vividly describes this experience:

"In the middle of the night I awoke suddenly with what seemed hundreds of bright lights shining in my face. And try as I would, I couldn't shut them out. I covered my face with my hands, buried my face in the pillow; sat up, lay down, but there they were, those lights, lights, lights! It was far worse than physical pain. I don't know how long it was before I slept again, but when I awoke in the morning,

they were perhaps less severe or intense, but still light, light, light! It was just as if I were looking at extremely bright lights and couldn't stop."

Dr. Ashby Turner, the eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist in Harrisonburg had helped Gray on several occasions, and this time she returned to him for his skillful assistance. When he looked at the eye, he spoke with unusual emotion to Mrs. Pifer, "You know, I believe I am going to be able to open the growth. You watch it, and when it is ready bring **Gray back.**" Something in the tone of his voice informed Gray that he was hopeful.

They returned home and the whole family watched the tiny white growth. The days passed and each day each member inspected the eye to pass his judgment as to its "readiness." On Saturday morning of that week, Mrs. Pifer inspected the eye and excitedly exclaimed, "It's ready." Then the rest of the family looked and with varied comments and affirmative head shakes agreed that it was "ready."

Gray would not permit herself to become excited or overly hopeful. Deep within herself she knew she would not see. She felt strongly that the operation was doomed to failure. But she spoke not a word. As the family gathered around the table, the main line of conversation centered on Gray and how wonderful it would be that night when she could see. She let them enjoy the brief period of hope; she couldn't spoil those joyful moments.

Dr. Turner took one look at the eye and said, "It's ready!" Gray got up on the operating table, and, as she did, the old feeling returned. For several days the lights which had been so painful disappeared, but now they came flooding back. The light was streaming through the window, but these lights were different. They stared at her even in the midnight darkness.

The room was charged with expectancy as Dr. Turner bent over her, steadily took the instrument and with a deft stroke pricked the spot. Nothing happened. He tried again. Nothing happened. He straightened up and spoke: "I don't understand it." Now the note of hope seemed muted, but he was determined and reached for another instrument in the small tray. This time a watery substance oozed from the eye. The spot was deceptive. It looked soft, but it was hard and unyielding. "I just don't understand it," muttered Dr. Turner as he replaced the instrument, "I just don't understand it." There was silence around the table that night, the voices of hope had faded. Gray felt sorry for them. Since she had known what would happen, she didn't feel the disappointment, but her heart went out to her parents and her brothers.

Later, Dr. Turner told her she would have to lose the eye. But before any operation was performed her brother insisted that she visit a specialist in Reading, Pennsylvania. This she did. In fact, three outstanding specialists carefully examined her

eye. She waited and waited for them to give their diagnosis. Finally, they came into the room and with a tremulous voice, Dr. S. L. Rode, the head specialist, said, "Young lady, I'm afraid we have bad news for you." This startled Gray. She thought perhaps the growth was malignant, and that would be calamitous. The doctor continued, "I'm afraid we can't save that eye for you." "Oh, is that all," she replied. "Why I could have told you that before you made the examination." They had expected Gray to break down and weep, and when she didn't, two of them wept for her; more for the pathos of her courage than from sympathy.

She returned to Mt. Crawford and in December of 1929, the eye was removed. Gray had thought that after its removal everything would be mid-night black. That all light would depart. She tried to prepare for this. She even turned out her bedroom light and lay in the dark for hours feeling that she would live in it for the rest of her life.

After the operation, the brightness which she had been able to see before was still there. How wonderful. The light had not departed. The day she walked out of the hospital and lifted her slender face toward the sun, its warm rays embraced her and its bright light filtered within. She could still see the sun. Not as brightly but enough to banish the complete darkness. As she walked down the sidewalk her heart rejoiced and lifted a grateful prayer to God, for still she walked into the light. Having such wonderful physical light, the spiritual light grew brighter. God was nearer to her than breathing.

Gray completed that year of public school work in music. Then in the summer of 1930 a new opportunity developed at the Hines Memorial Pythian Home in New Market, Virginia. This was a small Pythian-sponsored home for children. At her own request, Gray spent the summer in the Home on trial. She had told the Board that if they would permit her to work throughout the summer, and she failed, then she would know it and resign. They gladly agreed to do this. She began on June 23, 1930. Her resignation was reluctantly accepted fourteen years later in 1944.

The members of the Board and Pythians throughout Virginia looked with askance at the work of a blind person with children who could see. Many wondered if she would be able to meet their needs and be a companionable helper and counsellor. But as time elapsed and Gray demonstrated her marked ability as a teacher and a warm, spiritual friend to each child at the Home, Pythians from all over the state pointed to her work with pride and admiration.

In this lovely, well-built old colonial home, she spent happy, busy years of useful service. She taught the children music, helped them with their lessons, supervised study hall, managed the entire home in the absence of the superintendent and matron, played games with the youngsters, taught music and voice and gave private instruction in piano. As the years went by, it seemed impossible to Gray that she hadn't always been a part of the

Home and it a vital part of her.

Gray spent many hours in the Home training young people who attended the local high school. She wanted them to be able to speak well and express their ideas to others in such a forceful way that they could be successfully communicated to them. She was very proud when one of her favorite pupils was honored by being selected as the salutatorian of her class. Gray helped her prepare her speech and worked diligently with her as she repeatedly practiced its delivery.

Finally, the big night came and Gray was excited as her young protege stood before the large, attentive audience. She began perfectly and Gray could tell that the people were listening attentively. Everything was moving along splendidly, except for the roaring noise of an electric fan, which definitely interfered. To Gray's comforting relief the noise suddenly ceased. She, quite naturally, supposed that someone had turned off the fan. A little rippling gasp went over the audience. but Gray was so absorbed in the speech she didn't notice it. Her pupil went right ahead with her address, and not until after the program did she learn that when the noise of the fan had ceased, all of the lights in the auditorium had gone out. The self-control and composure of the young speaker spoke well of her excellent training and of the person who had directed her through the years and especially for this unforgettable occasion.

One of her notable contributions at the Home, was her exceptional work with some of the students in music. She aided them in forming quartets and special groups, and accompanied them on the piano. They gave programs in churches in New Market and the surrounding communities. Wherever they went, people were loud in their acclaim. The students demonstrated the excellent training they had received. The light of the teacher was being reflected by her pupils. Civic clubs and community groups began to request their services and later they presented several programs over radio station W. S. V. A. in Harrisonburg.

There were times when some special music was needed for Gray's students and the right thing couldn't be found. It was then that her creative powers began to operate, and she would emerge with just the right piece. The first song she wrote was for the little children in a quartet. It was called "Fairyland" and was the forerunner of many excellent songs and poems which she was to write for use in her work in cerebral palsy for speech stimulation and motivation. In this first poem she wrote:

Quite early one morning I ran out to play,
And straight to the apple trees hurried away
The blossoms all nodded a welcome to me,
And said: "When you're grown up, child, what will you be?"
"I might be a princess so splendid and fine,
And wear silks and satins and jewels that shine.
And maybe I'll travel to lands far away.
Oh, I'll be a truly great lady some day!

And now, little blossoms high up in the tree,
When you are all grown up, pray, what will you be?"
"We guess we'll be apples, all rosy and bright,
That's God's plan for us, and He always plans right."

Gray spent many happy hours in recreation and entertainment with the boys and girls. She would go out on the ball diamond with them and root first for one team and then for another. She is indebted today to the older boys at the Home for her knowledge of baseball and basketball. She would listen to the baseball broadcast with them and when terminology was used which she didn't understand she would ask the boys, who would eagerly explain. Often Gray felt that the boys would have enjoyed the game more if she hadn't been in the room, but they were thrilled to have her and felt important when they answered her questions. When fall arrived and the World Series began, she was able to yell, "Hit the old apple," and understand what she had said just like the rest of the gang.

Gray didn't attend too many of the basketball games at the high school, because usually in the evenings she was busily occupied with the younger children. But often the boys would stop by the room and say, "We're going out tonight and play, but you stay here and pray." And they really meant it. They believed in prayer and knew that she would pray for them. Not that they would win, but that they be good sports and play the game to the best of their ability. They knew, too, that if they came in at 10 o'clock or later, she would be waiting to hear who won. No matter what her boys and girls did, Gray was keenly interested and gave them encouragement and inspiration to achieve and succeed.

It was at the Pythian Home that Gray acquired her nickname, which friends have affectionately accepted and used down through the years. It was her first Sunday at the Home. The superintendent and matron had their daughter and her two children visiting with them. When Gray was introduced to the little girls, the younger one attempted to say Miss Pifer, but instead came forth with "Pipy." Ever since then it has been Pipy!

Mr. Peter S. Ford, Supreme Vice Chancellor of the Supreme Lodge Knights of Pythias, has paid Gray a gracious tribute in referring to her work at the Pythian Home. He writes, "During my many, many years of association with Miss Pifer, like most everyone else, I fell in love with her. I believe she has the most beautiful character I have ever seen or been associated with in any way. I have followed closely the children who were under her care during the time I was on the Board of Governors of the Hines Memorial Pythian Home. Most of these boys and girls have turned out to be very fine, upstanding citizens and attribute that largely to the splendid care and training Miss Pifer gave them."

Fourteen of her best and most fruitful years were spent with the children at the Pythian Home. During this time she was

associated with fifty-two children. Many of them have become successful citizens and have created happy, spiritual homes. Whatever success and happiness they enjoy today can be traced in large measure to the love, understanding and intensive training which they received from Pipy. She still lives in their hearts and lives.

In 1942, Mrs. Pifer became seriously ill with pneumonia. Later, it was discovered that she had cancer of the breast, and the doctors feared that her lungs were already seriously involved. This marked the beginning of a prolonged painful illness for her and a period of vicarious suffering and distress for the entire family. It also created a financial burden for Mr. Pifer, Gray and her older brother. Because of this added financial responsibility, and because she could not ask for a raise at the Pythian home, since there were only three children there at the time, she reluctantly decided to seek employment elsewhere. At first, this idea was frightening. She was not sure that she could get another job, although unparalleled opportunities for blind people were opening up. And, she had experienced the security and shelter of the Home for so many years, she wasn't at all confident that she could get along in a new or strange environment.

Nevertheless, she wrote to Mr. L. L. Watts, Executive Secretary of the Virginia Commission for the Blind in Richmond, to investigate the possibilities of employment in another field. Mr. Watts suggested that she come to Richmond and take the Commission's ediphone course and prepare for stenographic work, perhaps in a government hospital. One other blind person in Virginia was at that time employed in such an enterprise. In June, 1944, Gray went to Richmond and took the ediphone course and other stenographic work. She approached this work as she did everything else, with enthusiasm, determination and marked ability to master the task at hand. By September of that year, she had become so proficient in this work, that she was employed by the Richmond Social Service Bureau. Those in the Bureau who had been skeptical of hiring a blind person as a typist, soon changed into genuine devotees of blind secretaries, especially Gray Pifer. Miss Doris Yeaman, Supervisor of the Social Service Bureau, wrote concerning Gray and the kind of work she produced at that time: "I was greatly impressed with Gray's intelligence and ability. She typed perfectly beautiful letters, summaries and case recordings, transcribing from the dictaphone and ediphone, transcribing from notes taken in Braille and also taking dictation straight to the typewriter. I CAN SAY, WITHOUT HESITATION, THAT SHE IS THE MOST ACCURATE TYPIST I HAVE EVER KNOWN."

Gray lived with Mrs. Annie Gilman while working in Richmond and fondly called her Nannie, as did her many friends. Nannie was a dependable comforting friend in the time of sorrow, and a gentle nurse when death knocked on Gray's door. Mrs. Pifer died on Gray's birthday, April 8, 1945. It was difficult to

understand life without her mother, but she knew that the Father had wisely relieved her from the pain, and this brought acceptance and contentment. A few months later, Gray was stricken with virus pneumonia and for many long months she valiantly fought for her life. Nannie and other friends watched over her day and night, and finally the crisis passed and she was gradually returned to normalcy.

Late in the year 1946, Dr. J. E. Wine of Harrisonburg suggested that Gray go to Florida, where he felt the climate would do more to create a rapid healing of her physical being than anything else. But how was she to get there? Where would she live if she could make the trip? And where would she find employment? It seemed difficult, impossible. But so many times in her life the future had seemed difficult, the impossible had appeared on the horizon; then the God with whom all things are possible would begin to work in her life through others, and the impossibilities faded. She recalled the challenging words of Sir William Osler, who spoke from personal experience when he said:

“Without faith a man can do nothing;

With it, all things are possible.”

She prayed, she trusted, she did her best and left the rest to Him. This time would not be different, for already the hand of God was at work. The light of service would continue to burn!

CHAPTER IV

Into The Light

"And my blind eyes were touched with light."
—Helen Keller

"...the Sun of righteousness will arise with
healing in his wings."
—The Bible

Gray was too weak physically to make the trip to Florida when Dr. Wine had first suggested it. However, a year later she had regained some of her original strength and vitality and was anxious to go. But still the means of getting to this desired destination and the necessary funds to make the trip and support herself until work could be obtained, were unknown to her.

A member of Gray's family had died and left her a small inheritance. However, the lawyers had informed her that it would be six months or more before she received it. And, too, Gray was reluctant to leave Mrs. Gilman. She had been a faithful friend and companion whose selfless devotion and constant vigil during her illness had brought her back from "the valley of death."

Gray kept praying for the will of God to be done in her life. This prayer had become so much a part of her life, that in every situation it was almost spontaneous. "Father, whatever You want me to do. Wherever You want me to go. I am willing to do Your will."

Unexpectedly, she received a letter to which she attached no particular significance until she opened it and discovered to her amazement that it was the money from her inheritance. Following this wonderful news, she received a letter from her old friends, the C. H. Zieglers of Tenth Legion, who also had a home in Florida, stating that they had learned of the doctor's advice and would be happy to have her come to Florida and stay with them until they returned to Virginia. This was over-whelming. How wonderful God had been to her through her family and friends. Life took on new meaning and purpose. The horizon was bathed in sunlight.

It was January of 1947, when Gray arrived in Sebring, Florida. The first winter and until 1948, she was too weak to attempt a regular job. During that time she made many new friends, especially children and young people, and gave Braille demonstrations in churches, clubs and for other interested

groups. She enjoyed the experiences which each of these opportunities afforded and was happy in her new friendships, but deep within she was not completely happy. To a person who had always given so much and lived unselfishly, life could not bring the maximum happiness unless she could feel that at the close of each day, someone's life had been made better because she had lived. That someone's needs had been met because she had helped. She wanted to be usefully employed and needed to be gainfully employed for her funds were rapidly diminishing.

It was at this time that the greatest door of service in her entire life was beginning to open and she was on the verge of taking the initial steps into the light of the most wonderful chapter of her life. In the past, she had walked in the warm rays of the light, but now she would walk into its fulness and feel its healing strength and power as she gave herself in dedicated love to some of God's most treasured creatures and earth's most hallowed inhabitants. It seemed that everything which had happened in the past was in preparation for this most sacred trust.

The way in which this opportunity was presented and developed is graphically related by Gray and can best be appreciated in her own words.

"In the Spring of '48, I received a letter from the Pythian Home in Virginia asking me if I would be interested in returning to the Home and resuming my former duties. I seriously thought of accepting this kind offer, but I knew deep within me that I was not well enough to undertake the responsibility which it would entail. Oh, how wonderful it would be, I thought, if the Pythian Home were here in Sebring. It was about that time when someone suggested how wonderful it would be if the old DeSota City Hotel could be used as a home for children. This old building, which was standing idle, was located at DeSota City, about 5½ miles south of Sebring. Imagine our surprise when a few days later we picked up the local paper and saw headlines to the effect that a school for spastics had been opened at the DeSota Hotel.

"I really didn't know too much about what a spastic was at that time, but immediately my interest was aroused. The thought that perhaps I could render some type of service in such a school began to take rootage in my mind. Then a chapter in my life that I would not believe myself if I had not lived it, was written.

"One day in April of 1948, I was helping Mrs. Ziegler with the dinner dishes. Suddenly I said to her, 'You know I believe I am going to call the director of that school just on the chance that there might be something I could do.' Without hesitation I called the wife of the newspaper editor and got the name of the director. The things that this lady told be about her sounded most interesting. I hung up, waited a moment and then picked up the receiver again and dialed the DeSota City number. Even as I heard the phone ringing, I wished I hadn't done it. High pitched, crisp and clear came a voice. It was Mrs. Rose C. McQuade and she wanted to know what she could do for me, but I had made up my mind not to tell her I was blind, but simply

ask for an interview. I felt that if I could meet her, I could hold my own. I told her there was a matter which I would like to discuss with her, and wondered if she would be willing to grant me an interview. She said she would, but wanted to know right then what the nature of the interview would be. I then explained that I thought perhaps she might not be fully staffed and there might be something which I could do.

"Mrs. McQuade informed me that they needed a kindergarten teacher. 'Oh, dear,' I sighed to myself. Then I told her that I could take part of a kindergarten load, but not all of it. We talked on for awhile, and I was having to be more and more evasive. Finally, I said: 'There is something I must tell you right now! Bu— but, please don't close your mind against me as soon as I do.' She assured me that she wouldn't. Doubtfully and bluntly I said: 'I'm blind!' She responded that she was all the more interested and asked me to come out that evening at eight o'clock and talk with her.

"Rose McQuade received me graciously. We talked only a few minutes. She seemed certain that I was the person for whom they had been seeking. It was not a pretty picture which she painted, and I am glad she didn't try to make it sound any better than it was, and from the outset told me about the difficult points.

"At her request, I played a number on the piano and then she told me she wanted me to come mainly for music therapy work. It would be my responsibility to attempt to stimulate and motivate speech through music and use music therapy in the other possible ways with the cerebral palsied.

"We did not make any final decisions that evening, but decided that I would work part-time and see how things developed. I returned home and talked the entire idea over with God. Then I prayed: 'Father, if this is Your work, Your place for me, then, please, give me Your wisdom, Your strength and Your direction, and I shall gladly endeavor to follow.' On Friday of that week, I made my second trip to Villa Rose, the name which the McQuades had given their school, and began my work in music therapy. It was easy for me to accept and love these children, and it was obvious that they both needed and wanted love."

Villa Rose is a rehabilitation center for the cerebral palsied. It is a non-profit corporation founded by Mr. and Mrs. Peter J. McQuade, who are affectionately known to Gray and their friends as Aunt Rose and Uncle Mac. Mr. McQuade is the Administrative Director and Mrs. McQuade is the Director of Program and Services. Villa Rose is registered by the American Medical Association and has students from various sections of the United States. It was in this Center, and especially with Aunt Rose and Uncle Mac, that Gray walked into the light of greater service and became the only blind woman in America to work full-time with the cerebral palsied.

Cerebral palsy is a condition caused by a brain injury which prevents a person from using or controlling his muscles as he wishes. As a result much of the body of the patient is affected. A child may know what his hands, his feet, his tongue, his lips

are supposed to do, but he cannot control his muscles well enough to accomplish these movements. There was a time when because of the cerebral palsied's drooling, uncontrollable motions and facial contortions, he was considered feeble-minded or at least mentally deficient, and often he was incarcerated in a mental institution or kept isolated from society because his condition appeared hopeless.

Today, it is a different story. Study of and work with these people have revealed to doctors and therapists many new ways of understanding and helping them to a more normal way of life. Through a well-rounded program of physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and music therapy, and academic work, a large percentage of these people are being trained and educated to the extent that they can go out and take their place in society. And this is exactly what they want to do, for they have the same dreams, aspirations, ambitions and hopes that others possess.

In talking with Gray concerning the cerebral palsied, the writer asked her about some of their basic needs. She replied: "Generally speaking, I would say that more than anything else the cerebral palsied child needs love and understanding. Not pity, but love and understanding. The feeling of being wanted and needed; the understanding of his handicap, of the fact that he does have physical problems, but understanding of his capabilities, his aspirations, his desire and his willingness to work and to work hard to overcome his problems and to achieve a full useful life as a contributing member of society. The cerebral palsied child needs a sense of accomplishment. He has so many frustrations during the day that most people never encounter. For example, the effort to pick up a pencil is a very real one for him. He needs a feeling of accomplishment each day to encourage him to keep trying and working.

"Relaxation is a major need of the cerebral palsied child. Not only in his speech work but in every department. Breathing is the next major specific need as far as speech is concerned."

When Gray began this work, it was without any materials, texts, games, stories, songs or melodies. Therefore, she had to devise and create her own. To her this would be easier than trying to search for these things in places that might be unattainable. She had an excellent background in creating poems and putting them to music. She had done this repeatedly at the Pythian Home when specific needs arose, and now for even more reasons, this God-given endowment was being utilized. Little did she dream, when she was creating and composing poems and songs for her fifty-two normal boys and girls at the Home, that years later she would be using them to help her handicapped boys and girls in cerebral palsy work. But she knows that "God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform," and He was working through her, even then, in preparing her for a place of larger service, wherein these talents could be used. The boys

and girls at the Home, the Pythians of Virginia who gave their support and encouragement, the church groups, the public school teachers—all of them, unknowingly, were making a contribution to Gray's life and work that was leading her onward into the light.

In assaying to get the little children to breathe properly, Gray has devised one particular exercise which is unique with her. Many therapists use a candle and get the children to blow it out, and they delight in doing it. But since Gray is blind it would be unsafe to use a candle. Therefore, she opened another of those "secret doors" which she possesses and discovered that her students thought it just as much fun to blow the teacher down, or away, and also, to blow on balls of cotton. Gray commented on this exercise and related a fascinating little tale about the breezes which she uses with it.

"We don't have snow in Florida so we have to pretend. I get some cotton in my hand and we call it a snowball, and we become little breezes blowing the snowflakes here and there. Sometimes we make people happy; sometimes we are naughty little breezes and have lots of fun, we think. Then, again, we are little breezes ruffling the flowers' petals when they wanted to look their best for the princess who was coming to visit the flower garden and who had said that she would stay for a special visit with the flowers who looked the loveliest. Of course, the roses would be the loveliest. Didn't everyone know that? Then the roses felt something tickling them (Here we blow and make the breeze). They thought at first that a bug was walking on their necks and they shook their heads to get rid of the little rose bugs. They felt it again and the Little Breeze was having so much fun that he laughed aloud. Now the roses really did shake their heads violently and ruffled their petals and had their rose faces all crowded with frowns instead of charming, happy smiles. All of the other flowers imitated the roses, that is, all except the lillies, who laughed and laughed with Little Breeze when he came to annoy them. They opened their lily cups wide and filled Little Breeze just full of their sweetness.

"Then the princess came to the garden. When she saw all of the other flowers with their petals ruffled and their faces covered with frowns, she stayed with the happy smiling lilies. After that, the other flowers thought that they would always remember that it is not wise to get angry over every little thing that happens."

In getting the child to exercise his tongue, and for many this is a strenuous movement to make, she takes a small piece of Hershey bar, presses it against the dental ridge just back of the upper front teeth. The child lifts his tongue to get the candy, and when the tongue lifts, the candy drops right on it.

Gray also uses varied objects for speech stimulation and motivation. It is not uncommon to see bells, boxes, beads, bottles and such materials in her work room. All of these are put to original, practical uses in attempting to secure the desired goals for children. Did you know that a ball can talk? Bounce it and see if it doesn't say, "Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba."

Another more recent and very effective medium for speech stimulation and motivation, is the use of beautiful pictures. Doubtlessly, the reader will immediately ask himself: "How can a blind person use pictures to teach people who have sight?" That is a natural question and requires an explanation.

Two of Gray's closest friends in Sebring have been the Reverend and Mrs. E. F. Carwithen. Dr. Carwithen is the minister of the First Methodist Church. Both of these friends learned Braille so that they could aid Gray in her work. In the past, Gray had attempted to memorize where a certain object or person was in a picture and then describe it, but it didn't work out very well, and her feeling of inadequacy soon had its affect on the children. Now, Mrs. Carwithen procures pictures, mounts them and attaches a full, detailed description in Braille. She even captions each picture in Braille so that Gray can reach over in the file and pick out any picture she wants. Frequently, Gray will create a little jingle to accompany the picture. For example, Mrs. Carwithen got a picture of a delicious looking ham from which a large generous slice had been cut. Gray then wrote: "Good baked ham, all pink and sweet. If we had this how we would eat." The children enjoy saying the word "ham" and trying the word "eat." In saying "ham" they get their lips together and produce the M sound.

Some of the cerebral palsied children find it difficult even to utter a sound. Special work is planned to encourage vocalization and to make it easier. Sometimes they sing a melody for no other reason than to get all the vocal sound possible. To make it easier and encouraging, Gray writes simple little melodies around these sounds. Mrs. McQuade feels that this ability to create a melody around one sound is Gray's strongest asset. She wrote: "It is one of the most outstanding things Gray does in her work. I have not seen such a thing done anywhere else, and I have been to many speech centers throughout the country. I have watched any number of speech technicians operate and am well-acquainted with some of the most outstanding people in the field of speech, but I have yet to see anyone actually write songs around a specific sound that a child makes."

The results of Gray's patient, determined, energetic work are astounding. She has achieved success with students that others had considered almost beyond help. And she makes it an enjoyable and pleasant experience for them. A student who had completed one year at the University of California came to Villa Rose for special rehabilitation work. She observed Gray as she worked with the children. One day she said with great emotion: "If only someone had made it so simple for me when I was learning. I used to have to sit by the mirror for what seemed like hours and practice the **Sss** sound. How wonderful it would have been if someone had made a song or game out of it as you are doing." Gray determined right then to make the work just as pleasant and as much fun as she could.

Gray learned in the Spring of 1952, that it would be necessary for her to return to Virginia. Because of her health, it is necessary for her to live in the North in the summer and in Florida in the winter. She did not want to leave her work and especially "her children", but it was unavoidable. The McQuades, as always, were most understanding and encouraged her to seek work in cerebral palsy elsewhere, and return to them in the winter. Gray was not convinced that she should endeavor to do this type of work in the summer, and since she was going to Harrisonburg, she wasn't sure of where she would find work.

She had not been in Virginia a week before Mrs. Robert Strickler, chairman of the Rockingham Cerebral Palsy Center, visited her. Previously, she had visited Villa Rose and observed her work. Mrs. Strickler was direct with her question: "Pipy, how much time can you give us at the Center this summer?"

"I hadn't thought of giving any," Gray replied. "I had fully intended to do some other type of work."

"But we need you," Mrs. Strickler emphatically added.

"Let me think and pray about it," Gray answered.

Gray had a quiet time with God. She recalled the Friday night in Florida when this thought had come to her: "Don't say to the McQuades that you aren't going to do cerebral palsy work in Virginia. You might want to." She also remembered that they had encouraged her to do cerebral palsy work elsewhere. She did not want to stand in the way or close a door that voluntarily had been opened wide for her.

She also talked to Mr. Ralph LaHaie of the Speech Department at Madison College. Mr. LaHaie had worked with several of the students, and he thought that the speech motivation and stimulation through music would be a valuable aid to the students. On June 2, 1952, Gray began part-time work in music therapy and speech motivation at the Rockingham Center. She remained with the group until November 1.

During this time in Harrisonburg, she gave many demonstrations of her work at civic and fraternal clubs and in churches. Wherever she went, the audience received her with enthusiasm and amazement. And wherever she spoke, the radiant warmth of her spiritual power was visibly felt by her listeners. Gray made a lasting contribution to the work at the Rockingham Center and contributed inestimably to the lives of students and parents in making life more enjoyable and worthwhile. And to her, a great reward, is the reward of friendship and love and the kindness and goodness of friends which she sincerely confesses far surpasses anything she has to offer.

The Business and Professional Women's Club of Harrisonburg bestowed an high honor on Gray when they elected her as their candidate in the Woman of the Year Contest held last year in Virginia. Later, at their annual banquet which climaxed the observance of Business Women's Week, the Club presented her with a tape recorder which she had wanted for her work in

speech therapy, and which has been used effectively in conveying information from Florida to Virginia in the preparation of this volume.

In introducing Gray to the Club, her friend Mrs. Virginia Lindamood said:

"Gray Pifer is an outstanding example of womanhood who has contributed so unselfishly and so strenuously of her time, talents and strength to the improvement of life in the community. Probably her most notable contribution to humanity is her thoroughness in training and aiding the cerebral palsied."

In November, Gray returned to Villa Rose, where at the present time she continues to work in music and speech therapy. To her, life has never been happier, more meaningful and satisfying. As she looks to the future, it is with the prayer that she will be able to contribute more valuable ideas, poems, games, melodies and materials to make her work and the work of others in music and speech therapy more effective in the lives of these children. She wants them to be able to walk in the light and feel the warmth of God's love as they mature into wholesome citizens, who are able to make their best contribution toward a better society and a Christian world.

Gray's life and philosophy can best be summarized by her own description of a profound spiritual experience which she had one Sunday morning in the First Methodist Church in Sebring:

". . . It struck me with almost electric force there in church that morning. All at once, I knew, Christ had healed me!, not physically; my physical sight had not suddenly and miraculously been restored; nevertheless, I knew that Christ had healed, not in that moment, but all my life He had guided, directed, and controlled in such a way as to provide for me the kind of healing necessary for the life that He wanted me to live. Christ's healing power goes far beyond the physical. NOW I KNEW WHY BLINDNESS HAS BEEN, AND IS, THE GREATEST BLESSING OF MY LIFE. Why I have not been handicapped by that awful, that intense, yearning to be able to see, or what is even worse, by bitterness because of a physical lack. It was such faith in Christ, I had known all along, that had made this possible for me, but not until that morning had it occurred to me that this was all a part of His healing process. That He had not given me actual physical sight—He knew that I would not need it—but, unfailingly, He has provided the kind of sight that I needed, and for me, the result was, and is, a busy, happy life."

John Burroughs wrote in one of his essays: "I wish someone would light up the way for me." Many people, especially children, have made this plea and Gray Pifer has heard them and willingly offered to be "a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their paths." She walks humbly with her God. She walks in light.



**Miss Pifer And A Young
Student At Villa Rose**



Miss Pifer helping a young student with the chocolate bar exercise.



Miss Pifer and four members of the Rhythm Band

CHAPTER V

The Sacred Influence of Light

"The sacred influence of light appears."
—Milton

"Let your light so shine before men, that
they may see your good works, and
glorify your Father which is in heaven."
—The Bible

Charles H. Spurgeon once said: "The serene, silent beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world, next to the might of the Spirit of God." Gray Pifer's serene and holy life has been and is a powerful influence upon the lives of all with whom she comes in contact. One never meets her without feeling a strange spiritual warmth within himself and knowing that his life has been challenged to strive for more worthwhile things.

This chapter is devoted to impressions of a few people who have been greatly influenced by her life and who have had close and unusual experiences with her. Some are her former teachers, some her dearest friends, others her colleagues in the work of cerebral palsy. Each sees her in his own way, but all see her spirituality, unselfishness, bravery, keen intelligence and undying desire to serve others.

These unedited statements are in the words of the individuals who were kind enough to submit them especially for this volume.

I

To know her is to appreciate a great spirit and to be challenged to nobler efforts. She has those qualities of character that are deep and abiding.

For her there are not people, but persons. She has contact with individuals only—true they may be numerous and in a group, but each is carefully delineated and the distinguishing characteristics mentally recorded. This is so true that at subsequent times any fatigue, sadness or exhilaration are immediately detected by the deviation of voice tone. What is most important is that Miss Pifer, having detected these variations, sometimes before the person himself is conscious of them, is concerned and solicitous.

There is real participation in all of the activities of friends and acquaintances. Not only an eager listening as the experiences of others are related, but also a contributing, by taking her share of preparation and performance. For instance, when our Church became aware of the needs of the blind within the community, as brought to our attention by Miss Pifer, she was the inspiring spirit and guiding light. Personally she prepared lessons that would augment

and personalize the standard courses of instruction. This has been characteristic of her teaching in all areas; the adapting and personalizing of materials to fit the needs of specific individuals. The creation of stories and music to emphasize particular word sounds is frequently done.

Adjustment is one of life's great accomplishments and in this Miss Pifer has excelled. It is with no spirit of dogged determination that she overcomes handicaps but with conviction that these contribute to the thrill of living. No word of complaint is expressed that she, like all others must overcome obstacles.

Above all, and that which sustains her, is a victorious faith in God. In addition to her keen joy in public worship and discerning consideration of sermons, is a personal devotion to Christ which is enthusiastic and contagious. Of Miss Pifer it can truly be said, she "has been with the Christ and learned of him."

Dr. E. F. Carwithen, Minister
First Methodist Church
Sebring, Florida

II

I first became acquainted with Miss Pifer when she was on the staff of the Hines Memorial Home at New Market, and I was on the staff of the State Department of Welfare visiting children's institutions and making recommendations as to maintaining standards and acquiring licenses.

I was impressed with Miss Pifer's mental alertness, her sense of responsibility and her constructive relationship with the children under her care. Particularly, do I remember one discussion we had together regarding employment of handicapped people. We agreed that the most important element to be considered was the same as that to be considered in employment of persons who were not physically handicapped; that is, their attitudes towards themselves, their work and people with whom they work. We further agreed that what happens to you is not so important as the way in which you take it. She seemed glad to have someone agree with her about this, saying that usually people were inclined to pity handicapped people or else to think that they were inadequate.

About five years ago, Miss Pifer contacted me regarding work with the Welfare Department as a typist here in Rockingham County. I learned that since I had last seen her she had worked successfully in such a capacity with the Richmond Social Service Bureau. This Agency was in need of an additional typist for the summer months, and we were glad to employ Miss Pifer for the temporary position. Because of her health, she found it necessary to go south in the winter months. During the time she was here, we found her work very accurate, and her influence on both staff and clients was stimulating to the morale. She was enthusiastic, cheerful and energetic, and we considered her quite an asset to the staff.

Charlotte A. Crawley
Superintendent
Rockingham County Department
of Public Welfare
Harrisonburg, Virginia

III

Having been, for a number of years, a member of the Board of Governors of the Hines Memorial Pythian Home—then located at New Market, Virginia—I was in a position to observe Miss Gray Pifer's work during her period of em-

ployment there from June, 1930, to June, 1944; and to note the remarkable services that she rendered to our children in the Home, not only in the specific work for which she was employed but in many special services as well. Her regular duties included: Secretarial work, the teaching of piano and choral work, and the conducting, or supervision of study-hall. Miss Pifer had not been at the Home long before our children were in demand, by church, school, and civic organizations in the town and the surrounding area, for programs and other special performances. More important still, however, were the initiative and originality which Miss Pifer displayed in coping with the needs and the problems as they arose from day to day. She not only assisted the superintendent and matron with the general care and management of the children, but she could, and did (when it was necessary) carry the full management of activities at the Home.

Miss Pifer seemed to have a way of getting into the lives of the children (so to speak) and bringing out and developing potentialities and capacities, hitherto unrecognized.

I attribute Miss Pifer's success, very largely, to the fact that she had faith and confidence and was able to inspire these in others, and especially so in her work with children.

C. H. Zigler
Sebring, Florida

IV

I first met Miss Gray Pifer in May, 1952, and in a few weeks later she began to work at the Rockingham Cerebral Palsy Treatment Center with me. I thought at first the children might be apprehensive, but she explained her handicap to them and asked them to be her eyes. This pleased the children very much, as they had seldom been on the giving end of any transaction. As she worked with the children their whole attitude changed. Their speech work improved and I also noticed that their physical improvements had accelerated.

Miss Pifer's most admirable attribute is her endless patience. Once I was having a great deal of trouble arousing enthusiasm in one of our cerebral palsied children. Although I had changed the routine of treatment several times the boy still seemed to be bored, and therefore failed to show progress. I went to Gray with this problem and she replied: "We all have our peaks and our valleys you know! He's just in the valley."

She is making an invaluable contribution to the lives of our boys and girls at the Center.

Dr. Harry Thomas, Jr.
Cerebral Palsy Center
Harrisonburg, Virginia

V

"Would she be willing to learn to write Braille?" was the first thing I heard about Gray Pifer—the 'she' meaning me! Not that she had said of me, "Oh, I'd like to meet her," or any of the polite phrases, but a challenge from the first instant.

I did NOT want to meet Gray Pifer: a 'poor, stumbling blind person whose pathetic case would work on one's sympathies'—for so I imagined her. It was I who had been blind.

Gray doesn't make folks aware of being blind—recently demonstrating in a class for some very interested folks she taught for a full hour and the

watchers did not discover that the teacher had no physical sight!

With a sense of humor that gets to a laugh before you do, a deep understanding that knows when to advise and when to listen and let the other person 'talk it out', and a joyous personality that glows, small wonder that she is popular. She attended the Annual County Fair last year, and took in all the rides and thrills there were, until her escort was just about all in. Gray, though, was having a grand time, and took it all in her stride. Her enjoyment gave others more fun.

With the children she has often said to me, "I am not sure what we can accomplish, but I am working on a little song (or story) to illustrate the point and bring out what he needs." The one who could say only "Ha!" had a song written for her in which all she had to say was "Ha!" in an answering obligato, and it was attractive and to the point.

Pictures, toys, household articles that are common to most people become Something Special for the children's use. I never take the cork out of an ordinary pill bottle now; I "make a 'buh' sound" as I pull the top out, since I've watched Gray teach a child to say 'bug' or 'baby'.

Not being in school, I see Gray more on Sundays than any other time. In our Church School class between the teacher and Gray Pifer we receive many ideas: but we have learned we must think for ourselves, not just sit back and take what we are told.

One morning I was standing near enough to hear Gray thank the soloist of the service for the inspiring and beautiful message given through song; and the answer, "Oh, but I was watching your face, and you, Miss Pifer, were inspiring me." The preacher gives the same impression: "How do you know I wasn't asleep through the service,?" she asked him. "Because I watched your face. . ." and he had not only gotten help from her presence, but some cues.

"The handicapped person needs to have something to give," Gray has said. "They are indebted to others for so much. They need to be the ones receiving thanks, sometimes, for what they can do for others." Gray Pifer has given the world so much that we truly need to be thanking her.

Mrs. E. F. Carwithen
Sebring, Florida

VI

I am glad to have been associated with Miss Gray Pifer for nearly three years, from September 1944 until January 1947, when she was clerk-typist in the Stenographic Division of the City of Richmond Social Service Bureau of the Department of Public Welfare, and I supervised that division consisting of about eight clerk-typists at that time.

I was greatly impressed with Miss Pifer's intelligence and ability. She typed perfectly beautiful letters, summaries and case recordings, transcribing from the Dictaphone and Ediphone, transcribing from notes taken in Braille and also take the dictation straight to the typewriter. I CAN SAY WITHOUT HESITATION THAT SHE IS THE MOST ACCURATE TYPIST I HAVE EVER KNOWN.

Miss Pifer is a person very capable of assuming responsibility. She believes in doing whatever she does well and is never content just to "get by" or do anything in a slipshod manner. She has an especially good knowledge of the English language and composes nice letters.

Not only was Miss Pifer's work exceptionally well done, but she was a

nice person to have around—a genuine morale booster.

One could not be around Miss Pifer long without realizing that she is a born teacher, that she liked it and was good at teaching. She has a real interest in all people and it was interesting to notice what a good judge of persons she was.

Miss Pifer is a person of strong religious convictions, exemplifying her beliefs in her everyday living.

Her accomplishments have been many, but had she been stronger physically, it would be hard to tell what they might have been.

Miss Doris Yeaman, Supervisor
Social Service Bureau
Department of Public Welfare
Richmond, Virginia

VII

In the fall of 1927, I had the privilege of meeting Gray Pifer. Gray was going to Madison College, and was looking for someone to be her guide. We met at a social gathering. The first day I was her guide, we really learned to know each other, because I seemed to know how to guide her and show things to her. During the same time Gray was a member of Group Number 5 of the Laymen Evangelistic Club. The purpose of this group was to furnish music for churches. We also gave testimonies. We traveled and sang with this group for five years. In these years, we had many spiritual and social experiences.

I vividly recall the time when our group went to a country church to play and sing. There was a lamp on the organ. A kind gentleman came over to the organ to offer his services. I told him Gray could not see. He said, "Just a minute; I will get another lamp." I explained to him that she was blind. This shows that people who see do not understand blind people. Everywhere we have gone together, we have had experiences similar to this.

When I was married in 1934, Gray was working away. Five years after I was married, my husband and I received a little girl. She was born on March 27, 1939. Gray looked forward to the baby's coming. She had written a song in our child's honor called, "Baby's Rest Time." We named our little girl Nina Gray. Through the years while she grew up, they called each other "Big and Little Nina Gray."

"Take Up Thy Cross" is one of the numbers we sang in years gone by. When Gray and I have great sorrow, though miles apart, that song comes as a consolation to us. In April, 1945, Gray's mother was in Rockingham Memorial Hospital. Gray was in Richmond. A still small voice told me to go see Gray's mother. She had not spoken for two days. She heard my voice and talked to me connecting my voice with Gray's. I went to the telephone to place a call to Richmond to call Gray's home. While the girl was giving me change, Gray called the hospital. That did not just happen. God timed that. Gray came that night in time to talk to her mother. To Gray her mother's last whisper was a dear treasure. When her father died very suddenly, I called a friend of ours. At that moment I could hear her talking to Gray through the switchboard. That is how close we were that time. That did not just happen. Gray is now in Florida doing a wonderful work with the cerebral palsied children.

Mrs. C. B. Rhodes
Harrisonburg
Virginia

VIII

Were I to be asked to call to mind some person whom it was a real privilege to know and be associated with, along my way, it would come easy for me to quickly and pleasantly think of one, called Pipy. Yes, to know her is to know a good person! One does not suddenly conclude this, but rather feels and accepts that rare quality of wholesomeness which radiates about her in her everyday acts, thoughts and expressions. What more need be said of anyone! But lest my meaning of the term "good person" not be thoroughly understood, let me offer further clarification in the following facets of Pipy, the person.

Pipy is blind! I know, because I have to be constantly reminded of this. You see, she sees so much more and so much better than some of us that sometimes I forget that Pipy was born that way.

Pipy believes that a person having a physical disability is handicapped only when he permits it to become a limitation and thereby fails to utilize his potentialities up to his full capacity.

Pipy is good to talk with! Like any person to talk with, Pipy possesses a full measure of sincerity and understanding, together with a fine sense of balance toward meaningful thoughts and ideas, all of which prove her to be most refreshingly helpful to those drawn to her or any who seek her out.

Pipy is broad of mind! Tolerant of the other fellow's ideas and opinions, but never giving way to or relinquishing any of her own when she believes them to be right or just.

Pipy has an easy fluent way of conversing—without effort—but equally matches it with an appreciative mature balance of a good listener.

Pipy has a sparkling sense of humor and a ready broad smile to complement it.

Pipy has heart and fortitude! She exemplifies that very profound spirit which dares to make the most of what she has, so that one forgets she is not of robust physical structure.

Pipy is an inspiration, not only to the handicapped she so generously and energetically serves, but also to those who chance to meet and know her.

Pipy is blessed! Children love and respect her completely while working with her and miss her dearly when she is away.

Pipy has intelligence and wisdom, without being haughty or proud! Because she is ever ready to seek suggestions, advice or true criticism from others she believes to be honest and sincere with her.

Pipy is both teacher and student! Happy and willing to share all she knows, but seeking always to improve her store of knowledge and thereby lay away more riches to further share with those she serves and others she might prove helpful to.

Pipy's mighty task is to aid children stricken with brain injuries, given to her charge, by proceeding through the medium of music therapy so as to produce and stimulate vocal sounds, a forerunner to eventual speech.

Pipy's genuine interest in and natural feeling going out to her children while working with them is instinctively accepted and absorbed in such a manner that obviously produces in them her first and most important goal-conscious relaxation. This I shall pleasantly call — Pipy - child association.

With this mutual warmth established, she then proceeds to carefully observe each individual's favorite reaction to particular music and songs. Once ascertaining this she frequently attempts by every imaginable means to

stimulate and inspire the child to greater efforts. One of her most gifted methods is in writing songs and lyrics around the individual, using his name, his likes, his very self as the main character. Through this approach Pipy's main purpose is to produce vocal sounds, heard in imitating musical tones as in humming.

Pipy uses all sorts of gadgets and toys as well, to stimulate her charges. If Johnnie likes a ball, she will go to any extreme using the ball to stimulate Johnnie in producing the sounds of "B" even to writing a song in which the "B" sound recurs all through the song. In the case of a little girl whose chief interest might be a doll, the "D" as in doll or the sound of the first letter in the name of the doll is stressed, and the song of the doll comes into being.

All of this leads up to the child producing a single tonal syllable. Time is not important, but the first tonal sound produced is, and Pipy doggedly pursues this. Once this is accomplished, one might easily guess that Pipy just as energetically starts all over again to have the child add another syllable to the first and so until a word is formed.

Pipy pampers her children when pampering is necessary. Hugs them tightly and tickles their chins in the same spirit. Sings and plays her piano for them when such is of the essence, to their utter delight. Yes, and disciplines them, too, when that is in demand. This is all part of her planned process, interwoven into her daily work of teaching, with each move having its definite purpose.

All of this unfolds in love for their "Pipy" merely because their "Pipy" loves them — and they know it.

And speaking of love, she once told me that she was most puzzled and quite unsure of the proper approach to these stricken children, for her to produce best results for them.

"It seemed to me," she said, "that a hard, cold, technical method was not the best for me to use. But what?" "One night," she continued, "I was saying my prayers and suddenly in the middle of them, not a voice, but something like the voice of thought clearly emblazoned in my mind the words, 'Love them and they will progress.' From then on I did, and I found my work easier, the children and myself happier and progress in them far more noticeable."

Pipy has faith! She knows that a higher intelligence than her own exists and that upon Him, the First Cause, all of her goodness, knowledge and intelligence depends. This is fully expressed in the psalm that she loves best, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord. . . ."

I know Pipy walks humbly with God!

Mr. Peter J. McQuade
Administrative Director
Villa Rose Rehabilitation Center
for the Cerebral Palsied
De Soto City, Florida

IX

Since childhood I have known and loved Gray for her faith, courage, independence, optimism and perseverance, as well as her complete acceptance of life without sight.

In her presence one has the feeling of being a little closer to God. She

makes no decisions without prayer, asking for divine guidance.

One of her great assets is her complete satisfaction of being without sight, she is supremely happy in her world where she sees the bright, happy and beautiful side of life, where in reality it might be different, she says.

Through her years of working with people with sight, one is not aware of Gray not seeing. She is accustomed to doing things for herself.

Gray has a contagious sense of humor and always sees the funny happenings that occur in life, especially when they apply to her. One has only to spend a few minutes in her presence to laughingly realize this winsome characteristic.

Gray's ability to do things that seem impossible never cease to amaze me. For example, I visited her once at the Home in New Market. We were going to enter a certain room which was locked. Gray got out the key and without any hesitation, fitted it into the key-hole on the first attempt. This has always been humorous to Gray and me, since I usually fumble around four or five times trying to do the same thing. We have often laughed together over my insistence in turning on a light for her so that she won't fall down the steps. These anecdotes illustrate so well my acceptance of Gray as a person without a handicap. It is difficult to consider her otherwise when she is so natural and composed in all of her actions.

Gray is an inspiration to the sightless and to those who see, as she radiates love and understanding. She stands ready at all times to help in any way she can. Service is her motto.

Her work with the cerebral palsied is outstanding. To see her at work with them is to believe. Words cannot adequately describe what Gray is doing to brighten the lives of these children through love, understanding, music, and above all, a "spiritual magnetism" that attracts them to her.

All of us who know Gray are proud to claim her as a great American, who loves her country and teaches the principles of democracy daily to her pupils. She is a sterling example of a dedicated, Christian American.

Mrs. Virginia Lindamood
Director of Women's Activities
Radio Station W.S.V.A.
Harrisonburg, Virginia

X

In speaking of Gray Pifer, we say with Saint Matthew, "O woman, great is thy faith." In watching her work with our children at Rockingham Cerebral Palsy Center, we feel a miracle is being wrought before our very eyes. Her personality radiates a spirit of hope; her voice words of courage; her touch love and understanding.

Truly we think of "Miss Pipy" as a "pioneer" in speech therapy with music since she has opened the eyes of so many workers to the possibilities of what can be done in this field for the cerebral palsied child. Her work has lightened the soul of many parents and given many handicapped children a touch of happiness in accomplishment.

Mrs. R. B. Strickler, Chairman
Rockingham Cerebral Palsy Center
Harrisonburg, Virginia

XI

To have an individual live in your home is to learn to know that indivi-

dual as few others ever are able to. Pipy has lived with us for as much as six months out of a year recently, and it has been our privilege to have her spend many hours with our three girls. To us, the blessing of her love, her patience, her understanding, her Christ-likeness, upon our children is an unsurpassable benediction.

Pipy has an inexhaustible fund of stories and songs which are as delightful as they are educational. She has the right song or verse for that particular child listening with rapt attention. But it isn't only entertainment. To see children crowding about her is to understand that they are loving her as they are learning from her. We might say that she teaches "The Way of Christian Living." And, who teaches it in such a way that our little ones know it is the right way, the happy way.

One evening, when "Daddy" came from town without Pipy, the children rushed to the door in eager anticipation of her presence. When they did not see her, a chorus cried, "Where's Pipy?" When told she would not return that evening, the girls wilted, stood around with their disappointment erasing the smile from their lips and dulling the glitter of their young eyes, then quietly drifted off to less satisfying childhood occupations.

Through Pipy's efforts, our girls have learned and are learning to appreciate spiritual values as well as such mundane but important things as music and poetry. From her they hear of the wonderful love of God that permits her to do so much for others, though she is afflicted and handicapped.

It is impossible to evaluate the good our children derive from her life, but we thank God most humbly for the privilege of sharing in it.

Fred and Dora Fechtmenn
Harrisonburg, Virginia

XII

It is indeed a rare privilege for a teacher to write a brief sketch about one of his students, especially when one of them has become a true humanitarian. Such a student as Gray Pifer brings proof of God, because her living proves it and gives cause for adoration, lifting my mind up to heaven every moment and causes my life to be one continued act of devotion and service.

One may look upon the earth and see her produce. It is for us to examine and see what this productions contains. Wisdom and power ordained the whole. To view the whole is admirable, but what can better employ one's eyes than in tracing out the Creator's greatness in Gray Pifer. Here my mind must examine with wonder the devotion in such a fine character.

She received the command and obeyed, the power was in her to do and create and fill a niche in humanities' needs. Piety to God and benevolence to her fellow creatures has placed Gray in a position to perform these great duties.

It is true I taught this young woman carefully and patiently in music and life as head of the Music Department in the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind. Now, to see how she accepted the teachings is a challenge to me to do better. She has taught me after these many years to study God's works diligently. Who shall teach the one? Who shall inform the other? Only like understanding my dependencies.

Martin G. Manch, President
Institute of Musical Art
Staunton, Virginia

CHAPTER VI

Creative Light

"Light is the first of painters."

—Emerson

The poems and stories which constitute this chapter are representative of the creative work which Gray does to meet the individual needs of her students. Some of her creative work has been done in moments of leisure for personal enjoyment and because the idea demanded to be expressed. However, most of it is in the result of needing just the right verse or story to inspire or assist a student in an exercise or activity. Some of these verses have been set to music and are more effective when accompanied by the original melody.

A brief description of the therapeutic value of each selection is given in Gray's own words, to help the reader better understand the effective use to which they are put.*

In her creative work, Gray demonstrates another gift which God gave to her and which she returns to Him by giving light to others.

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POEMS

I

A PRAYER HYMN

(This simple prayer-hymn was written especially for the older students at the Rockingham Cerebral Palsy Center in Harrisonburg and consists of one syllable words which begin with the lips apart.)

Hear us, help us, hold our hand,
All our hearts in hope unfold;
Ease us all of hate and harm,
Hear us, help us, as of old.

BIRD VERSES

II

(These couplets are slanted to make the children feel important by using their names in the verse. Any name can be injected to suit the needs of the students involved.)

The Bluebirds said:

"I go

To sing my song for little JOE."

Said a pretty Robin and his Mommy:

"We'll sing our song for TOMMY."

Said a Redbird high up in the tree:

"Cheerily, cheerily
For MR. BILLY."
Said Mr. Crow:
"Well, to tell the truth,
I sing my 'caw, caw,' for RUTH."
Said the Mockingbird:
"Oh, what fun!
I've enough songs for EVERYONE."

III

NIGHT-TIME BREEZES IN THE SPRING

(I needed a special-type song for my older group at Villa Rose. Something that would facilitate breathing work and allow participation by those with major speech difficulties. But I wanted it to be more than a mere singing exercise for tone and speech sound, I wanted it to "say" something.)

Night-time breezes in the spring,
Softly whisper, as they bring
Strength to every growing thing,
Night-time breezes in the spring.

Ah - - how softly,
Ah - - how gently,
Ah - - how sweetly,
Ah - - they're singing!
Ah - - not jestful,
Ah - - but zestful,
Ah - - and restful,
Ah - - they're singing!

(Note: The group as a whole participates in the first four lines. In the remainder, those with major speech involvements sing the "Ahs". The classes enjoy it both as a song and as a choral reading.)

IV

SNOWFLAKES' WINGS

Where are your wings, little snowflake?
I've tried, but I never can see.
How do you fly, little snowflakes?
I wonder! Where can your wings be?
From high in the sky,
The little flakes fly.
Such dainty and fairy-like things!
So softly they light,
Trying to see your wings flutter,
But snowflakes, pray, where are your wings?
All day I've sat by the window
And watched all you snowflakes with care,
Trying to see you wings flutter,
As swiftly you fly through the air.
From high in the sky,
The little flakes fly.
Such dainty and fairy-like things!
So softly they light,
Like wee birdies white,
But snowflakes, pray, where are your wings?

STORIES

I

TILLY AND TOMMY TONGUE

(It's so easy for us to thrust the tongue out and then draw it in. But for many of my students it is a real effort, indeed, they have to learn to do it. I am one teacher who encourages her students to stick out their tongues and I stick out mine right back at them. I do have special music and rhythm for the thrust and withdrawal of the tongue. This little story, used mostly with the younger groups, is for lifting and lowering the tongue and for sideward movements. The story is done slowly and the tongue movements illustrated.)

Bobby was a nice little boy who went to visit a strange town. When he arrived, he noticed that all of the people had their lips stuck out, but they didn't look unhappy to him. Then he discovered that they were whistling. He looked up and saw the sign over the postoffice and it read: HAPPY TOWN, U.S.A. All the people were whistling because they were happy. As he stood there watching the happy people, he heard someone calling: "Oh Tilly, Tommy, come upstairs." Bobby wondered who that was calling. He soon discovered that it was Mrs. Tongue calling her daughter and son. In a few minutes a little girl and boy came running down the street. They were tongue people, so of course they looked like tongues. (Here the teacher should put out her tongue and begin moving it from left to right, slowly. Left, right, left, right, as they marched down the street, and rapidly from left to right as they ran up the stairs.)

"Here we are, Mother," they called. "What do you want with us?"

"I would like for you to help me sweep the house," she replied.

"Oh," said Tommy, "I don't want to sweep the house, Mother, I want to go swimming."

"I don't want to sweep either," Tilly repeated. "I want to go swing under the big tree."

"All right, you may, but first you must help me sweep the house." And so the children got their brooms, and being tongue people they swept their tongue houses. (Here the children sweep their tongue over the roof of their mouths.)

The children swept well. Their Mother said: "Tha't fine, but you forgot something." They look around.

"Oh, I know," said Tilly, "we forgot to dust." So they got their dust cloths. (The students dust by wiping their tongues all around their lips.) Now the furniture was shiny and clean.

"That is fine," said Mother as she looked at the furniture. "Tommy, you may go swimming. Tilly, you may go out and swing."

Down the stairs the two children scampered. (Rapid movement of tongue from left to right.) Down in the yard, Tommy hurried off down the hill to the lake which was near the house, and Tilly ran under the big tree where she had her nice swing. As Tommy ran down toward the lake, he heard a voice saying: "Tommy, Tommy Tongue, may I go swimming with you?" He didn't have to look around to see who was calling. Only one person would sound like that, and that was Pat Pout.

"I should say you can't, Pat Pout. I want to have fun when I go swimming and I can't have fun with a person who pouts all the time."

"I don't care," replied Pat with his lips stuck out as far as he could

stretch them. "I'll just go up and swing with Tilly." So Pat Pout climbed the hillside and went under the big tree where Tilly was swinging.

"Can I swing with you, Tilly?" asked Pat.

"No you can't. I want to have fun, too. I don't want someone pouting around me all the time."

"I don't care. I'll just go down there and sit down under that big oak tree all by myself." And away he went, stalking down the hillside with his lips stuck out.

Just then, Sammy and Sally Smile came running down the street. Tilly called to Sally to come and swing with her. And, of course, Tommy invited Sammy to come swim with him. They liked Sally and Sammy Smile, because it's always fun to have happy people to play with you.

As Pat Pout watched the two little girlys in their swings going up and down, back and forth, he began to bring his lips back out of a pout and into a smile, and back into a pout again, and then into a smile. At first, he kept in rhythm with the swings, and the more he did it the easier it was to keep his lips back in a smile. After a while, Sally and Tilly happened to look at him when he was smiling. They were surprised.

"Sammy, Tommy," the two girls called, "Pat Pout is smiling." The boys came running to the top of the hill and looked at Pat. Sure enough, Pat Pout was smiling, although his lips were still moving back and forth a little.

"Oh Pat, come down with us," the boys called, "we'll be glad to have you swim with us now that you are smiling like that."

"Oh, gee, thank you. Oh, uhh, I mean it's nice to smile. What fun we can have." He ran down to the water, smiling and happy because he had found that it's much nicer to smile than to pout.

All this time, Bobby, who had come to Happy Town, was looking on. "Why I must tell my twin sister, Bertha, about this. And I must bring her here to meet these smiling, happy people."

II

HAPPY HOPPY

Hans and Hanna were twins. They had many pets, but they loved their five little bunnies best of all. There were Poppa Bunny, Momma Bunny, Big Brother Bunny, Baby Brother Bunny and Happy Hoppy. Happy Hoppy got his unusual name because he was such a happy bunny and because he was always hopping up high in the air. He spent most of his time hopping high up in the air. Hanna wrote a little song about him, and it went like this:

"Hop up, hop up, happy, happy Hoppy.

Hop up, hop up, happy, happy Hoppy."

One day when the Poppa and Momma Bunny came into the yard where they lived, they saw Big Brother there, they saw Baby Bunny Brother there, but they didn't see Happy Hoppy anywhere.

"Where is Happy Hoppy?" asked Momma Bunny.

"Oh, hopping around somewhere, I suppose," replied Poppa Bunny. Just then they heard a little bunny voice saying:

"I am up high, I am up high."

"Did you hear that?" asked Momma Bunny.

"Yes, I did," replied Poppa Bunny.

"Oh, Happy Hoppy has been made into a pie," said Momma Bunny. Big Brother Bunny and Baby Brother were frightened and they began to cry

funny, bunny tears. Then they heard the little voice begin to cry out:

"Help me, help me, I am up high, I am up high."

"We would help you if we could," cried out Momma Bunny, "but no one can help you if you have been made into a bunny pot pie."

"Oh help me, help me help!" The little voice was weak and far away.

At this time Hans and Hanna came running out into the yard. They saw

"Oh help me, help me, help!" The little voice was weak and far away.

but they didn't see Happy Hoppy.

"Where is Happy Hoppy," Hanna asked right away.

"I don't know," replied Hans, "but I'll find him."

"No you won't," said Momma Bunny. "Happy Hoppy has been caught and made into a pie."

But you see, Hans and Hanna didn't understand bunny language and they didn't even know the bunnies were talking to them. Hans began to hunt for Happy Hoppy. He hunted and hunted, of course, in the highest places.

"Here he is," called Hans at last. "He crawled way up here in the bushes."

"Did you hear that?" Poppa Bunny said.

"Indeed I did," Momma Bunny said happily. Now Big Brother Bunny and Baby Brother Bunny stopped crying and hopped around for joy.

Hans climbed down from the hillside and the bushes and put Happy Hoppy safely on the ground, and he hopped right over to Momma Bunny, Poppa Bunny, Big Brother Bunny and Baby Brother Bunny. How happy all of the bunnies were. You see Happy Hoppy had not been saying to them, "I am a pie," but rather, "I am up high." How happy everyone was, Hans and Hanna, Momma Bunny, Poppa Bunny, Big Brother Bunny, Baby Brother Bunny, and especially Happy Hoppy, because he had not been made into a pie.

(In all of these poems, stories and exercises, it is important to understand that repetition is vital to achieving the desired results. I shall always remember the statement which an experienced staff member made to me my first day at Villa Rose. "Remember always to repeat, repeat, repeat." This cannot be over-emphasized in speech therapy.)

With the older students at Villa Rose this year one of the outstanding projects has been the writing of "our" version of AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL in which we have tried to show how and why America is beautiful to the cerebral palsied. With one stanza for each department—physical therapy, occupational therapy, education or academic therapy and speech or music therapy. In the main, therefore, the following was actually written by the students themselves.

For Physical Therapy:

O, Beautiful for skies of hope
That ever brighter grow
As sitting, standing, walking, now
We daily forward go.

Refrain:

America! America! may God guide us each day.
In paths of right
Led by love's light
America's true way.

For Occupational Therapy :

O Beautiful for helping hands
That serve with patient care
That our own hands may learn to serve
And do their useful share.

Refrain :

America! America! may God's hand guide,
That we may do our part
With hand and heart
America for thee.

For Academic Therapy :

O beautiful for knowledge store,
Of which we may partake
As teachers doing God's own work
Our brighter future make.

Refrain :

America! America! we would no more of thee,
And of the world thru grace unfurled
The wiser we shall be.

For Speech and Music Therapy :

O beautiful for voices free,
From silence deep and long
Through sounds and syllable and words
Then glad clear speech and song.

Refrain :

America! America! for blessings full and free
Our voices raise
In songs of praise
To God and unto thee.

CHAPTER VII

Children of Light

"Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

—Christ

". . . believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

—Christ

This chapter is devoted to six brief case studies of students Gray has helped in music and speech therapy at the Villa Rose Cerebral Palsy Center. They are presented to give the reader some idea of the wonderful progress which many of her students are making. The presentation of these studies has been slanted to emphasize the contribution which Gray has made; however, the reader should not assume that these results were obtained by one person or one department alone. There was complete cooperation among all of the departments at Villa Rose. Gray, of course, would be the first to acknowledge the splendid work of the various departments.

Mrs. Rose C. McQuade, Director of Program and Services at Villa Rose, has graciously prepared these studies in collaboration with Gray, so that they would be technically correct and perhaps helpful to other therapists who perchance will read these pages.

The reader may find it difficult to comprehend the diagnoses of these cases, but should not disturb himself with the technical terms. Each of them is a description of some form of brain injury, which is the basic cause of cerebral palsy. Gray has accepted these children and youngsters as God's creatures and through her knowledge, skill, understanding and patience has helped them to become children of light.

CASE NO. 1

ADMITTED: August 1948.

AGE: 8 years.

DIAGNOSIS: This patient was a left Spastic Hemiplegia of moderate degree due to a spontaneous intracerebral vascular accident at the age of 16 months. In addition he had daily left sided focal Jacksonian Epilepsy. His mentality was good.

Behavior upon admittance was erratic. Speech upon admittance was rapid, unrhythmical, with articulation problems, and repetitive with a nervous strain. A general program of therapy was carried out — Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, etc. The first approach to the speech problem in Miss Gray Pifer's

department was to build up security in this patient and confidence in himself, developing better patterns for cooperation and a sense of accomplishment. The specific treatment can be classified as rhythm, tone, games, stories, songs, individual therapy and extensive group work.

This patient was discharged in December of 1950 and from the silent member of the group he had definitely become the leader, working consistently. His tone had developed more clarity, was sweeter and truer. Memory and retention had developed to normal and behavior improved 100%.

Student discharged to take part in a normal home program with an eye to Special Education facilities in his area.

CASE NO. 2

ADMITTED: April 1949.

AGE: 17

DIAGNOSIS: This patient is a Dystonia Athetoid, a rather severe form of Cerebral Palsy, with infinitely more involvement than other classified types.

At the time of his admittance to the Villa Rose there had been marked regression and a considerable amount of psychological quirks had developed, although the patient could be classified as a genius mentally. Thus, his psychological problem was infinitely more serious than the actual handicap.

Music Therapy was administered by Miss Gray Pifer to develop pleasanter emotional response, as well as a sense of accomplishment and of course the general purposes of relaxation, training and shifting tension, particularly in cases of this type. Likewise, to carry through on assignments centered around music, which over a period of time would have to carry this patient away from himself. Much of this was done through individual therapy, but it wasn't too long before the patient became good group material by setting examples for those in his class. He eventually organized the first Post Exchange the Villa Rose had and did a splendid job of running this small business completely on his own. Along with his Music Therapy Miss Gray Pifer specialized this patient's academic subjects with an eye towards extending his educational program following his dismissal from the Villa Rose School. The most outstanding factors in that part of his program were his assignments in English, particularly his Compositions, which helped to bring out his creative ability and expression.

This patient was discharged in December of 1950, is now attending a High School with normal boys and girls, is making honor grades and plans to attend a very popular University at the end of this semester. We have followed him since his dismissal and have found his habits to be as normal as any human being could possibly be.

CASE NO. 3

ADMITTED: March 1951

AGE: 3 years

DIAGNOSIS: Spastic Hemiplegic with a history of convulsions.

This patient was born a perfectly normal, healthy, precocious individual and handicap was due to an accident when she was six months old and fell approximately three feet from a bed onto a thick carpet and sustained what was thought to be a minor concussion. A craniectomy was performed, a large extra dural hematoma was exposed and removed. Following all of this, both Grand Mal and Petit Mal seizures developed, in number at least eight or nine a day. She was admitted to the Villa Rose approximately two and a half years after the accident, at which time seizures continued and she was quite a disturbed

child, cried a great deal, was not toilet trained, and her attention span was exceedingly low, and behavior was most erratic. She would lie on the floor and bang her head pathetically and refuse to have anything to do with anyone. At the time of her admittance she was receiving huge amounts of drug therapy.

When the above patient was first admitted to Miss Gray Pifer's class, she did not participate in any of the activities and had pronounced dislikes and likes, and more dislikes than likes. While she had speech, she was not using it, as it was considerably immature due to a limited social program as a result of her handicap and a program was set up immediately to bombard her with speech, sounds, words, stimulation and motivation. Her personality problems were ignored and Miss Pifer treated her as though she were positive that the child could carry out all the requests made of her. She was not asked to do any specific thing, but speech was put into pleasant songs and games to induce co-operation, which followed. By November of the same year she was able to sing, as well as know exactly what she wanted to sing and play. She was willing to work in order to have the things she preferred. It was a joy to work with her, as her former problems seemed to have pretty well subsided. Her attention span was developing and her ability to identify and name objects had improved tremendously, as well as a vast increase in her vocabulary, which was rapidly doing away with baby talk.

This patient had improved so much with her Music Therapy program that we were able to admit her to a normal nursery school and gradually start to wean the child from her institutional regime. We did not want her to be too surrounded with the security she had found under her program. Shortly afterwards (December 1952) she was officially discharged by our neurologist and is now attending a perfectly normal situation at home.

CASE NO. 4

ADMITTED: February 1949.

AGE: 6 years

DIAGNOSIS: Spastic Quadriplegia, Rigidity, with Petit Mal Seizures, and further study revealed that a portion of his cortex was missing, due to congenital factors.

This patient was admitted upon probation as the parents' chief concern was to get this little boy on his feet in order to make things easier at home for the mother. He had no speech, was unable to walk, did not feed himself independently, showed no interest, although he was pleasant and happy little child in general.

A program was started which included all areas of the training and treatment program at the Villa Rose, but very little progress displayed itself in any department with the exception of his response to Music Therapy. It was found that he could sing a great number of words, for they meant little or nothing to this patient unless they were sung with a rhythmic accompaniment of arms and hands. He did not identify objects, although the first spark of interest along that line came in that class with winding and unwinding colorful rug yarn. He began developing interest in other objects, which meant more words and more songs. Later he showed preference for certain objects, all of this indicating development of interest and attention span. It was found throughout this program that music had a definite effect on this patient and would have to be used as a means to coordinate all other therapies and, in short, Miss Pifer would have to become a Physical Therapist as well as an Occupa-

tional Therapist with this patient.

The technicians exchanged notes and coordinated ideas and it was in Miss Gray Pifer's department where this little fellow took his first steps. This was done by finding a song which brought about a kind of flutter or pleasant tremble from head to toe. At first there was a slight tremor along with the flutter, as well as a hysterical reaction as though the patient were bubbling over with the pleasantness of what he was trying to do. One long chord followed by the "Marine Hymn" would get this patient up on his feet and going. He actually dispensed with crutches, braces, skis and all other orthopedic aids that are used in the physical training phase with patients of this type. While the general prognosis of this patient remained more or less poor, its ultimate objective was secured and he was independently walking. Discharged in September of 1950.

CASE NO. 5

ADMITTED: September 1948.

AGE: 22 years.

DIAGNOSIS: Patient is a tremor athetoid quadriplegia with marked tension in her right upper extremity. Her chief problem was that of vocational rehabilitation and making preparation to hasten her college training, which was held back by her handicap.

Her speech was good, but she needed a great deal in the way of relaxation, breathing and inflection work. She thought she would be unable to sing, because, "I am a monotone," she told Miss Pifer, who, however, thought otherwise and proved it. In less than three months this patient was producing singing tones and her progress continued until by the end of the term she could sing with a group, following the melody quite well. But of even greater importance was this patient's work at the piano, but it was only with the greatest effort that she could with one hand on the keyboard strike a note at a time. Eight months later she could play thirty scales in thirty minutes with both hands, could strike simple chords and play simple numbers. This meant that the end results were achieved in that she could manage the typewriter, which she would have to use for her college assignments and in maneuvering many domestic situations a young girl of her age would be subjected to.

This patient was discharged in July of 1949, returned to her University, is making good grades and has recently become a very charming little bride, holding her end of the responsibilities as well as any normal individual could.

CASE NO. 6

ADMITTED: August 1951.

AGE: 6 years.

DIAGNOSIS: This patient was ataxic due to hypyrexia (high fever).

Although he has not been discharged, his progress record has been so outstanding the following will serve to clarify some of the problems encountered by Miss Pifer with the ataxic child. Upon this patient's admittance there was a tremendous amount of hyper-activity and overflow of emotions, which were not the uncontrollable type seen in other types of C. P.'s, but rather a condition typical to the personality of most ataxic children. He could not walk or feed himself or take care of any of his personal needs, his speech was almost nil with the exception of babbles and expressive sounds, but very few words, if any. He did not seem to understand what singing, for example, was about, nor did he remain still enough to absorb anything that was given to him at

the time. His program was set up to develop a more normal and quiet attitude and try to control that inner turmoil, as it were, that kept him in excessive physical motion. Music therapy was used with very soft, slow selections and he was spoken to in almost a whisper. Rhythm work was started and proved quite satisfactory as long as he was under constant supervision. He could not take part in group activity. In due time he was making an effort to sing and vocalize and gradually his little vocabulary of half words became whole words. He identified the objects used in his songs. Speech was going along although it too followed that very hyper-active motion, but meant having to slow down on the speech we were developing.

In summary, at the end of twenty months this patient's vocabulary has increased so much that it would be impossible to record the number of words and combination of words he is using. He has become a staunch part of group activity, his hyper-active handicap is still prevalent in spots, but not during his actual training program. He has learned to control this and can do so with reminding. He has taken several independent steps, has learned to feed himself alone and if his present ration of progress continues, it will be safe to say that he should be discharged from his present regime within the next year, walking and talking and making some plans to continue his special education at home.

HV1792 Wright, Melton. c.1
P INTO THE LIGHT; THE GRAY
PIFER STORY.
(1953)

Date Due

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND
15 WEST 16th STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10011

Printed in U.S.A.

